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# THE STORY OF THE GREAT WAR

BY

DONALD A. MACKENZIE

BLACKIE & SON LIMITED  
LONDON AND GLASGOW

**BLACKIE & SON LIMITED**

*50 Old Bailey, London*

*17 Stanhope Street, Glasgow*

**BLACKIE & SON (INDIA) LIMITED**

*Warwick House, Fort Street, Bombay*

**BLACKIE & SON (CANADA) LIMITED**

*1118 Bay Street, Toronto*

## FOREWORD

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In this volume the story of the Great War is told without any unnecessary emphasis on its inevitable horrors or the atrocities committed by the enemy. The causes that led to it, as revealed by documentary evidence, are briefly stated.

In dealing with the war as a whole, the writer has found it impossible to include the campaigns conducted in German East Africa and German West Africa, important as these may have been, but has concentrated attention on the military events in Europe and Asia that were the direct means of forcing a conclusion with Germany. The general history of the naval operations is extended to all the oceans of the world, but is similarly confined to events of major importance.

As the writer's intention has been to produce such a story of the war as would leave on the mind of the reader an impression of its out-

standing features, it will be found that a considerable amount of space has been devoted to narratives of individual heroism displayed by our soldiers and sailors.

The dark cloud that suddenly enveloped Europe in 1914 was not without its silver lining. That spirit of unity based on common ideals which binds together the nations of our world-wide Empire was intensified and brightened in the hour of need, with the result that the Empire has emerged from the conflict greater and stronger than ever it was.

DONALD A. MACKENZIE.

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1911

Russia

H.M. KING. GEORGE V



*Pandharan Mukherji -  
1 Magesh Row, Calcutta.*

# THE STORY OF THE GREAT WAR

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## CHAPTER I

### How Germany Made War

That singular calm which precedes a cyclone prevailed in Europe before the greatest war in history burst forth in all its fury. "We were on better terms with Germany", declared Mr. Lloyd George at a London demonstration in November, 1914, "than we had been for fifteen years. There was not a man in the Cabinet who thought that war with Germany was a possibility. Our relations had improved. There was not a diplomatic cloud over the German Ocean." Yet the political barometer was falling. On 28th June occurred the assassination at Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, of the heir to the Austrian throne. This now historic tragedy did not seem at first to be pregnant with far-reaching political results, and even

when it was alleged that the Serbian Government was not free of blame, and a definite charge was formulated against it by the Austrians, Sir Edward Grey, the *British Foreign Minister*, declared that "some of the circumstances quoted in the Austro-Hungarian Note respecting Serbia roused sympathy with Austria". The Note was, however, of unprecedented character. It not only demanded the punishment of those alleged to have been concerned in the plot, but the humiliation of an independent State and the extension of Austrian influence in the Balkans. "I have never before", commented Sir Edward Grey, "seen one State address to another independent State a document of so formidable a character."

Serbia appealed to Russia as its protector, and the Government of the Tsar set to work to effect a peaceful solution of the difficulties confronting the small and kindred nation, with the result that Serbia agreed to comply with the demands of the Austro-Hungarian Government except in so far as these threatened to make it a subject State. Serbia proposed to submit the points under dispute to the Hague Tribunal, and its attitude in this connection received the support of most of the European Powers. Great Britain appealed to Germany in the interests of peace, refusing to credit the suspicion that Berlin was in reality, in the diplomatic sense, the cyclonic storm-centre.

Germany made answer to the effect that Russia and Austria should settle the matter between them, and Britain approved of this suggestion. It then seemed as if all would go well. The representatives of Austria and Russia met, and, as Mr. Lloyd George put it in 1914, "were getting on admirably, so admirably that Germany got alarmed and declared war on Russia".

The German Ambassador in Vienna had been working for war. He assured the Austro-Hungarian Government of Germany's support, and although Russia offered to stand aside and allow the four Powers, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, to settle the dispute between Austria and Serbia, Germany alone refused to consent to this arrangement. "The question at issue", the Berlin Government then declared, "is one for settlement between Serbia and Austria alone." It was on 27th July that Sir Edward Grey announced in the House of Commons his proposals for a conference. On the following day Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. A partial mobilization of the Russian army was ordered on 30th July, and next day, the situation having grown more grave, a general mobilization was ordered. Meanwhile the British Government strove for peace. On 29th July, Sir Edward Grey made appeal to the German Chancellor, saying: "If you can induce Austria to satisfy Russia, and to abstain from going so far as to come into

collision with her, we shall all join in deep gratitude to your Excellency for having saved the peace of Europe." The German reply was to ask Britain to remain neutral, on the understanding that Germany aimed at "no territorial acquisitions at the expense of France". It was recognized that France would be involved in the war as the ally of Russia. Great Britain refused to promise to remain neutral on the German terms. It could not stand aside and allow France to be "so crushed as to lose her position as a Great Power and become subordinate to German policy". Germany would give no undertaking with regard to the French colonies, and even suggested that Britain should ignore her treaty obligations as regards the neutrality of Belgium. The German Chancellor touched on this phase of the problem by saying that "it depended upon the action of France what operations Germany might be forced to enter upon in Belgium; but when the war was over, Belgian integrity would be respected if she had not sided against Germany".

The German offer to Great Britain was at the time very aptly characterized as "infamous". It was based on the assumption that we desired peace "at any price".

Events moved rapidly and the political horizon grew darker and darker. As has been noted, general mobilization was ordered in

Russia on 31st July. On 1st August, King George appealed by telegram to the Tsar to "remove the apprehension" in Germany with regard to mobilization, and the Tsar replied: "I should gladly have accepted your proposals had not the German Ambassador this afternoon presented a Note to my Government declaring war". Russia had, previous to this, frankly offered to suspend her military preparations, which were, as it transpired, being pushed forward in full knowledge that Germany was secretly mobilizing. France also received a communication from Berlin on that fatal first day of August. It was an ultimatum demanding to be acquainted with her intentions in the event of a Russo-German war. France replied that she "would do that which her interests dictated". On the same day Germany invaded Luxemburg, and on the following day French territory was entered at Cirey and an ultimatum was presented to Belgium. France was thus involved in war without any formal declaration from Berlin.

The Belgian ultimatum was marked "very confidential" and stated:

"Reliable information has been received by the German Government to the effect that French forces intend to march on the line of the Meuse by Givet and Namur. This information leaves no doubt as to the intention of France to march through Belgian territory against Germany."



Following this quite unfounded assertion, came the hypocritical announcement:

"The German Government cannot but fear that Belgium, in spite of the utmost goodwill, will be unable, without assistance, to repel so considerable a French invasion with sufficient prospect of success to afford an adequate guarantee against danger to Germany. It is essential for the self-defence of Germany that she should anticipate any such hostile attack. The German Government would, however, feel the deepest regret if Belgium regarded as an act of hostility against herself the fact that the measures of Germany's opponents force Germany, for her own protection, to enter Belgian territory."

Belgium was asked to adopt "a friendly attitude", and told that if she showed resistance Germany would, "to her regret, be compelled to consider Belgium as an enemy". In this abrupt, offensive manner Germany plunged into a long-premeditated war.

The independence and neutrality of Belgium as an independent State had been guaranteed by treaty on 19th April, 1839. This treaty bore the signatures not only of the accredited representatives of Belgium and Holland, but also of those of Austria, France, Great Britain, Germany, and Russia. In 1870 this agreement received further confirmation by a treaty signed by Britain and Germany at London, in which the specific statement was made, on behalf of the King of Prussia: "*It is his fixed deter-*

*mination to respect the neutrality of Belgium".* The contracting parties undertook further to employ their naval and military forces to ensure the observance of the treaty.

Germany was further bound as one of the forty-four States which, at the Fifth Convention of the Hague, agreed to the following articles:—

I. The territory of neutral Powers is inviolable.

II. Belligerents are forbidden to move across the territory of a neutral Power, troops and convoys, either of munitions of war or of supplies.

III. *The fact of a neutral Power repelling, even by force, attacks on its neutrality cannot be considered as a hostile act.*

As late as 29th April, 1913, German statesmen referred in the Reichstag to this nation's obligations in this connection; "Belgian neutrality", declared Herr von Jagow, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, "is provided for by International Conventions, and Germany is determined to respect these Conventions". At the same meeting Herr von Heeringen, Minister of War, said very plainly: "Germany will not lose sight of the fact that the neutrality of Belgium is guaranteed by International Treaty".

Indeed, on 2nd August, the very day on which the German ultimatum was presented to Belgium, Herr von Below, the German Minister at Brussels, said to a group of Belgian journalists who interviewed him:

"The (German) troops will not cross Belgian territory. Grave events are imminent. Perhaps you will see your neighbour's house in flames, but the fire will spare your dwelling."

On 3rd August, the Belgian Government replied to the German ultimatum protesting against the proposed violation of its neutrality, and stating that it was firmly resolved to repel every attack on its rights.

Next day the King of the Belgians addressed his Parliament and declared, "I have faith in our destiny; a country which defends itself commands the respect of all; such a country shall never perish. God will be with us in this just cause. Long live Independent Belgium!"

This firm stand had not been anticipated by Germany, nor was the ultimatum which on the same day was dispatched from London to Berlin demanding an assurance that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected.

Sir Edward Goschen, the British Ambassador at Berlin, who presented the ultimatum, found the Imperial Chancellor greatly agitated. "His Excellency", Sir Edward has told, "at once began a harangue which lasted about twenty minutes. He said that the step taken by His Majesty's Government was terrible to a degree; just for a word—*neutrality*, a word which in war-time had so often been disregarded—*just for a scrap of paper* Great Britain



D-41

Photo by S. J. A.

### KING ALBERT AND GENERAL JOFFRE

A meeting between two national heroes, the King of the Belgians on the right and the famous French General



10.

Photo: Bourne & Stegeland

## LORD KITCHENER

Drowned off Odessa Island, 1916, going down with  
H.M.S. *Hampshire*, which struck a mine

was going to make war on a kindred nation who desired nothing better than to be friends with her."

Sir Edward, in his reply, said "it was, so to speak, a matter of 'life and death' for the honour of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to do her utmost to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked".

Germany refused to comply with the terms of the ultimatum. "The plan for the invasion of France", confessed the *Deutsche Kriege Zeitung* on 2nd September, 1914, "was thoroughly thought out a long time ago. *It was necessary for its success that it should take place in the north by way of Belgium.*"

General von Bernhardi, in his notorious book *Warfare of To-day*, had previously declared, with full knowledge of Germany's aims and policy, "The neutrality of Belgium will not stop us. . . . France must be so crushed as never to be able to rise again to interfere with us. . . . This result must be secured at any cost, even at the cost of a European war."

But the cost was greater than had been anticipated. Great Britain declared war on Germany at 11 p.m. on August 4th. On August 5th the Germans had entered Belgian territory and made the first attack on Liège, which was repulsed with heavy loss.

The British army and navy were mobilized. Sir John Jellicoe was appointed to the Com-

mand of the Grand Fleet, and Lord Kitchener became Secretary of State for War.

Kitchener was at the time British Agent in Egypt. He had paid an official visit to London, and, his business having been completed, he took train to Dover, intending to cross the Channel and travel by train to Marseilles, when he received an urgent message to return.

His appointment as Secretary of State for War was approved not only by the British Empire as a whole, but also by France, for, as a young man, he had fought as a volunteer in the French army during the Franco-Prussian War. He set himself at once to the task of sending the British Expeditionary Force to France. A speedy mobilization was effected, in accordance with the scheme previously prepared under the direction of Lord Haldane, and within a matter of twelve or fourteen hours some of the British troops were already on the Continent. The whole Expeditionary Force was ready in forty-eight hours. Many troops were crossing the Channel before they became aware whither they were bound. "Thanks to the cordial co-operation of the Navy," Lord Kitchener said afterwards, "the troops went abroad with perfect smoothness and without any untoward incident whatever."

Lord Kitchener then set himself to the task of raising a new army, and when he issued his appeal for recruits, young men flocked to the

colours in their thousands. He had confidence in his fellow-countrymen and they had confidence in him. "This very serious conflict", he said frankly, "will entail considerable sacrifices on our people. These will be willingly borne for our honour and the preservation of our position in the world and will be shared by our Dominions beyond the seas."

Australia had already offered 20,000 men, and other offers had come from New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa, while many Indian princes unreservedly placed the resources of their States at the disposal of Great Britain for the duration of the war.

In these early days of preparation, Lord Kitchener was an outstanding figure. The hour had come and with it the man. It seemed as if his whole life had been spent in preparation for the great work he was destined to perform for the Empire in its hour of need.

In Germany it had become fashionable to regard British civilization as decadent. The British army was supposed to have deteriorated, and the British people to be too timorous, or too pre-occupied with political problems, to take a bold and resolute stand against this powerful nation in arms.

When it became known in Berlin, by means of a flying sheet issued from a newspaper office on the night war was declared, that Britain was opposing German aggression, a mob made a



disgraceful demonstration in front of the British Embassy and flung cobble-stones through the windows. British subjects who were unfortunate enough to be in the streets were roughly handled, and many were arrested on trumped-up charges of espionage.

Next day the Kaiser sent a message to the British Ambassador expressing regret for the outbreaks, but added: "You will gather from these occurrences an idea of the feelings of my people respecting the action of Great Britain in joining with other nations against her old allies of Waterloo". In this message the Kaiser formally notified the Ambassador that he divested himself of the honorary titles of British Field Marshal and British Admiral.

The intervention of Great Britain threatened a dislocation of German plans for a short and successful war. As events have proved, it led ultimately to the downfall of German military and naval power.

From the outset the German people displayed an ugly spirit. The British, French, and Russian Ambassadors and their staffs were insulted and jeered at by crowds gathered in the streets and at railway stations. But it was chiefly against Britain that enmity was shown. A hysterical "Hymn of Hate" was composed and sung everywhere. It was printed even in school books. "God Punish England" became a fashionable term of greeting. Rubber

stamps impressed this phrase on the daily correspondence of private individuals and business firms. High and low, the people as a whole became obsessed with the idea of striking Britain a swift and overpowering "knock-out blow". Nothing else seemed to matter in the early days of the war. Two days before the British troops reached Belgian soil, the Kaiser, carried away by the clamour of press and people, issued his notorious command to his army, in which was concentrated the vanity and self-confidence of his entire Empire:

"It is my Royal and Imperial command that you concentrate your energies for the immediate present upon one single purpose, and that is, that you address all your skill and all the valour of my soldiers to exterminate first the treacherous English, and to walk over General French's contemptible little army.

"KAISER."

But, proud and confident as was the war lord, with all his great armies, so well organized and so well prepared for war, he was to discover in time that, in the words of the Psalmist, "He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate."

## CHAPTER II

### From Mons to the Marne

"We are in self-defence," declared the Imperial Chancellor in the German Reichstag soon after the outbreak of the German-planned war, "and by necessity our troops have occupied Luxemburg, and perhaps have already entered Belgian territory. *This is an infraction of international law. . . .* We shall", he added, "repair the wrong we are doing as soon as our military aims have been reached."

It was against innocent Belgium that the first heavy blow was struck, and it was in Belgium that the German army first created that state of terrorism which was intended to shock the civilized world and cause all who opposed the might of Germany to tremble and offer ready submission.

An unexpected resistance was set up from the outset. German plans were temporarily thwarted by the fighting round Liège, and valuable time was thus gained to allow France and Britain to hasten forward their military preparations. On 7th August the Germans at Liège, having lost heavily, asked for an

armistice of twenty-four hours to bury their dead; but the request, which was really made for other reasons, was refused by the Belgians. Three days later the Germans entered the town of Liège. The forts held out until subjected to a bombardment by heavy guns for five days; the last fell on August 17th. Namur forts were bombarded for four days, and the last was taken on August 25th, two days after the town was occupied.

The sweep of the Germans through Belgium, in which towns and villages suffered terribly from shell-fire and deliberate fire-raising, gave them their first military advantage over the French, who were quite unprepared for an attack from the north. The Kaiser's forces outnumbered the Belgian and the French troops that were rushed forward to aid them, and also the British army, which was sent across the English Channel with all speed to assist the French and Belgians, while all the enemy were well equipped, well supplied with munitions, and well led. The German generals had gained experience at their annual manœuvres in handling great masses of men, and were skilled in all the arts of modern warfare.

General von Kluck commanded the right wing of the invading army, and, after overcoming the unexpected and valiant resistance of the Belgians, had soon the greater part of north-western France at his mercy. He could

have captured the Channel ports and rendered very difficult the future operations of the British expeditionary force, at the same time gaining for the German navy important bases for raids on British shipping and attacks on British naval squadrons. But the Germans were obsessed by two desires. One was to destroy the British army, and the other to capture Paris. The war staff at Berlin dreamed dreams of Christmas dinners for German officers in the French capital, and of a spectacular entry into the city of the victorious Kaiser and his frowning war lords. They believed that if Paris fell the war would come to a speedy conclusion.

The resistance set up by the British army, its glorious retreat in face of what seemed overwhelming odds, and its speedy recovery as a striking force had much to do with the unexpected reverses which the Germans were doomed to sustain.

Acting in conjunction with Field-Marshal Joffre, Commander-in-Chief of the French army, General French, the British Commander-in-Chief, moved his army towards Mons. Its left wing extended along the banks of the canal to Condé, and its right to Bray and Binche. The Fifth French Army was extended on the British right in the vicinity of Charleroi and across the River Sambre, which flows through Namur.

The Germans attacked Namur on August

21st. On the same day the battle of Charleroi began, and it ended on the 22nd, the French being compelled to retreat before overwhelming numbers. Namur was evacuated by the Allies on the evening of the 23rd. Its fall was announced by the Kaiser next morning, but before the last fort had been destroyed.

The Germans began their attack on the British army at Mons early on the afternoon of the 23rd, which was a Sunday. From the outset the British right was seriously threatened by superior numbers. Joffre had warned the British commander that three German corps were advancing against his front, and that another corps was making a turning movement from the direction of Tournay. The British left, lying along the canal bank, was thus endangered. Nor was the situation less perilous on the right, for the Germans, having gained possession of the passages of the Sambre between Namur and Charleroi, were driving before them two French divisions. The retreat of these divisions was leaving the British right wing "*in the air*". Such was the situation on that memorable Sunday afternoon when the British expeditionary force first came into touch with the enemy. Heavily attacked on the front, threatened on the right and left by turning movements, there was nothing in prospect but retreat. But before a retreat could be effected, the Germans had to be thwarted in

their immediate design, so that time might be gained.

"On paper" the British force was defeated almost before a shot was fired. It should, according to the calculations made at Berlin, have been thrown into confusion, shattered, and driven like chaff before the wind. But the courage, determination, and magnificent discipline of the British army upset all German calculations.

The attack began with dramatic suddenness. It was between noon and one o'clock when it first became known in Mons that the Germans were at hand. Many men were at dinner on the right when shrapnel began to burst over them. Those who had not long arrived were washing shirts and socks, or bathing in the canal. A rush was made to arms, and soon the men were in action. The weight of the initial attack fell on the British right, and a slight retreat was made so as to occupy a stronger position. Mons then became a dangerous salient, and General Hamilton was warned not to hold the town too long, and when he found himself threatened, to retire behind it. Some of the German regiments who came against Mons drove in front of them men, women, and children from the adjoining Belgian villages so as to be shielded against British bullets.

Everywhere the German attacks were made

in close formation. "They came on", as a British soldier has graphically put it, "in solid square blocks. One could not help hitting them." Although there was hardly time to dig trenches, the British forces set up a fierce resistance, mowing down the enemy with well-directed artillery and rifle fire. Bridges spanning rivers and canals had to be destroyed so as to prevent the Germans effecting easy crossings. This work had to be accomplished under heavy fire. Men swam to set fuses, with the result that some bridges, which the Germans began to cross, were blown into the air. The masses crowded on either side of a canal were meanwhile riddled by showers of bullets. At one spot on the British left, the Germans, after two bridges had been destroyed, ran out pontoons. Ten times they constructed temporary bridges, and ten times they were destroyed. Their losses in men, horses, and material were exceedingly heavy but still they came on in great numbers. The British were outnumbered by four and six to one, but *doggedly they fought and held their ground*, displaying that unconquerable spirit which was beyond all German expectations. If the opposing forces had been anything like equal in numbers and equipment, the Germans would undoubtedly have suffered heavy defeat.

There were numerous cases of individual bravery, and many instances of small forces holding out against overwhelming odds. "We



held the Germans all day," wrote a wounded English officer, "killing hundreds, when about 5 p.m. the order to retire was eventually given. It never reached us, and we were left alone. The Germans, therefore, got right up to the canal on our right, hidden by the railway embankment, and crossed the railway. Our people had blown up the bridge before their departure. We found ourselves between two fires, and I realized that we had about 2000 Germans and a canal between myself and my friends. We decided to sell our lives dearly. I ordered my men to fix bayonets and charge, which the gallant fellows did splendidly, but we got shot down like ninepins." The remnant escaped.

Meanwhile, General French had decided to retreat to a new position early next morning. All day long the defenders had fought with great gallantry, and when night came on there was no rest for them. Binche on the right had been evacuated by the cavalry, and the 2nd British Division made a pretence that they were to retake it. This diversion deceived the Germans and facilitated the retreat of the main force. Sir Douglas Haig, who was in command of the 1st Corps, was able to withdraw to a new position without much loss during the night. Other generals had less conspicuous success. Gallant charges were made by cavalry when the Germans followed up the retreat. On Monday morning the 9th Lancers and 18th

Hussars made a dashing attack on a great body of German Uhlans who had captured some British guns. The men rode to the attack with bare heads and in their shirt-sleeves. "The German cavalry", wrote an officer at the time, "have not got the pace and free movement of our men. They all seem stiffer in the saddle, and, although superbly mounted, their horsemanship lacks the suppleness of the British cavalry. Some of the hussars and lancers were almost in a horizontal position on the off-sides of their mounts when they were cutting right and left with bare arms. Our losses were heavy, but the enemy suffered much more—four or five times as much is the estimate of the General—in proportion to numbers engaged."

A German Uhlan, who was taken prisoner, said he hoped never again to meet such fighting men as the English lancers. "We were four to one of them", he said, "but in a flash, puff! they were on us and through us. Every one of them speared a man—I got this wound in my shoulder—and some of our horses went over. Before we could re-form or get ready they came dashing back, yelling like furies, and they were through us again. Ach! it was awful, horrible! and then, by Gott! they turn about and do it again. This time they stayed with us longer. . . I will never meet them again, please you!"

The gallant lancers saved several guns. Other guns were rescued by infantry, who

dragged them along until German horses, whose riders had been killed, were caught, harnessed, and yoked to them. 17,876

Wounded men fought until they were completely exhausted. It is told by one officer that a man addressed him, saying, "Sir, may I retire?" "Why?" asked the officer. "Sir," replied the man, "I have been hit three times."

In his official dispatch, General French wrote regarding the stand made at Mons: "It became apparent that if complete annihilation was to be avoided a retirement must be attempted. . . . The movement was covered with the most devoted intrepidity and determination by the artillery, which had itself suffered heavily, and the fine work done by the cavalry in the further retreat from the position assisted materially in the final completion of this most difficult and dangerous operation. Fortunately the enemy had himself suffered too heavily to engage in an energetic pursuit."

The first retirement was made upon the Jenlain-Bavai-Maubeuge line. Here the army was reinforced by the 19th Brigade, which was brought up from the lines of communications. Maubeuge was surrounded by hills, on which were forts. These had been neglected, however, for France devoted all its attention to those on its eastern frontier. The Governor, however, had done his utmost after war was declared to organize resistance. Over 20 miles

of trenches were dug, great masses of wire entanglements were accumulated, and fifty batteries were set in position. Maubeuge was thus able to hold out for eight days under a heavy bombardment. The garrison consisted of 40,000 middle-aged men, of whom 5000 were killed or wounded.

Keeping up continuous attacks the Germans did their utmost to turn the left wing of "the contemptible little army" and drive it into the doomed stronghold, there to surround it. They had dreams of another Sedan. But their dreams were set at naught. "It was not to forts of steel and concrete", a German critic wrote afterwards, "that the Allies owed their strength, but to the magnificent qualities of the British army."

French recognized that Maubeuge was little more than a trap. "I felt", he has written, "that not a moment must be lost in retiring to another position." The Germans were at the time somewhat exhausted, their losses having been heavy, and it was hoped their pursuit would not be too vigorous. They seemed to be quite assured that General French would tarry on the Maubeuge line, but on the 25th the British army was marching south-westward all day. It was not until the evening that Haig's First Corps was caught up at Landrecies and Morvilles by the pursuing Germans; the Second Corps, under Smith-Dorrien, fought rear-guard

actions, which, however, did not become too serious until a halt was made on the Cambrai-Le Cateau line at about 3 p.m.

The next day, the 26th, was the most critical one of the retreat. It was clearly necessary that the retreat should be continued, but, at the same time, to render it easier and safer, the Germans had to be crippled. A counter-attack was therefore planned by General Smith-Dorrien, and consented to by General French, on condition that the withdrawal should be resumed as soon as a success was achieved. It was, therefore, to check the German pursuit that the battle of Le Cateau was fought. Although greatly exhausted by continuous marching, the British soldiers displayed magnificent spirit. The men were longing to get into grips with the enemy, who were in great strength, having no fewer than four army corps. Thus opposed by four to one, the British fought a desperate and gallant battle. Every available man, including the telegraphists and escort, went into action. Our losses were heavy, but those of the enemy were greater. "There had been no time to entrench properly," General French has reported, and the artillery was outmatched by great odds, yet the Germans suffered so heavily that when a retreat was ordered their capacity to follow in pursuit was much reduced. The action reflected with the greatest credit on General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien. "I say



FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT FRENCH



GERMAN PONTOONS UNDER FIRE

without hesitation," French wrote in his dispatches, "that the saving of the left wing of the army . . . could never have been accomplished unless a commander of rare and unusual coolness, intrepidity, and determination had been present to personally conduct the operation."

The British troops were undoubtedly much heartened by their success, and although greatly wearied they resumed their retreat, making towards St. Quentin. It was a memorable night. A great thunderstorm broke out and rain fell heavily. Not a few men collapsed from exhaustion, dropping down by the roadside and immediately falling asleep. A number were afterwards taken prisoners, and some straggled about the countryside next morning and made towards Amiens, where they spread sensational stories that reached London and gave origin to the rumour that the British army had been overwhelmed by disaster. The Germans believed that the "contemptibles" were thoroughly demoralized. But this was a case of the wish being father to the thought.

At St. Quentin, Smith-Dorrien's corps obtained some respite from their labours, and were refreshed by a few hours' sleep. Haig's corps on the British right moved south all day, and in its rear-guard action there were heavy losses, especially among the Munsters.

From the 27th August till 2nd September,



when the Marne was crossed, the retreat went on steadily. The left and right wings were separated until the night of 1st September, when they were united at Betz after having crossed the River Aisne.

The retreat took place through many a terror-stricken village, and along roads crowded with refugees. "I pity the poor people who live in the villages about the war part," wrote a Bedfordshire soldier. "With reddened eyes they look to us in mute appeal. We do what we can for them, and they do what they can for us. . . . May God spare our country from such sights as I have seen! I say it as one who has, with others, broken into a house that we might fire at an advancing enemy through the upstairs windows. Imagine a terrified young woman and an elderly man sitting in a darkened room, horror-stricken, whilst shells screamed about their home and bullets phitted and whined through windows and upon walls. It was a consolation to know these two sought refuge in a cellar. We retired, shot at by shells and bullets. . . ."

At railway stations crowds of women and children were seen weeping bitterly because there were no trains to carry them away. Many of the poor refugees were taken into army carts and wagons. "We had twelve in our wagon," wrote a soldier, "and let them eat our food."

Often small parties made gallant stands. A

private in the Manchester Regiment, which was being encircled, relates: "The colonel says to us, 'No surrender, lads! First you have your rifles, then your bayonets, then your butts, and, finally, your fists'. And we remembered it, too. It was pretty hot, but we were quite cool. . . . The Germans were a lovely mark in spite of their blue-grey uniforms. . . . I fired over six hundred shots altogether, before the retreat was ordered."

An officer has told of the desperate attempts made by the Germans to turn the retreat into a rout. "The Germans", he wrote, "were bent on getting through our lines at any cost of men, and it was simply one grand procession of men toeing the death line in the hope of wearing us out. . . . We could have got away with comparative ease had we gone the way they wanted us to go, but we would have uncovered the French left, and every man of us knew that the safety of the whole French army depended on our stand. Therefore we held on, and fought inch by inch until we had fallen back on the French left."

The British soldiers sometimes marched thirty miles in a single day. When the enemy came near "we received them in the good old way," as a soldier has narrated, "the front ranks with the bayonet, and the rear ranks keeping up incessant fire on them. After a hard tussle they retired hastily. . . . After

the last attack we lay down in our clothes to sleep as best as we could, but long before sunrise we were called out to be told that we had got to abandon our position. Nobody knew why we had to go; but like good soldiers we obeyed without a murmur. The enemy's cavalry, evidently misunderstanding our action, came down on us again in force; but our men behaved very well indeed, and the Germans gave it up as a bad job. Their losses were terrible. . . ."

The final stages of the great retreat were not forced entirely by the pressure exercised by the enemy. French cavalry and infantry had come into action with the intention of relieving the British rear-guard, and met with considerable success. On 29th August, Joffre and French agreed between them to continue the retiring movement so as to draw on the enemy, and then to assume the offensive when the situation became favourable. As subsequent events demonstrated to the full, this decision was a wise one. It not only gave the Allies a strategic advantage, but deceived the Germans, who became over-confident and underestimated the strength of their opponents. It was taken for granted at Berlin that the British army was no longer to be reckoned with as a powerful and well-organized force. The lure of Paris drew the Germans on, and they took risks which were to lead to their undoing.

The spectacular success of the Germans, and the jubilant and premature rejoicings in Berlin, caused a wave of pessimism to sweep over the Allied countries. It was feared that Paris would fall, and the departure of the French Government to Bordeaux was regarded as an indication that Joffre had no hope of saving the capital. A great exodus of Parisian citizens was suddenly begun. From Paris to Tours "there were sixty unbroken miles of people", wrote a correspondent at the time. All classes shared in the panic. Whole families were conveyed in motor-cars, taxicabs, lorries, carts, and pony traps. Many trudged wearily on foot and slept by night at the wayside. In this great tide of humanity were many refugees from the invaded districts, who had fled to Paris in the hope that they would be safe there until the invaders were driven across the frontier.

But between Paris and the German armies a steel wall was rapidly being constructed. Joffre was being given his chance to strike a severe blow and send the invaders reeling backwards across a great part of the country they had invaded too rapidly and too confidently for their own safety. On the banks of the River Marne the hope of a speedy German victory was shattered once and for ever.

## CHAPTER III

### Victory of the Marne

The military situation in France at the beginning of September was undoubtedly critical. Except at Verdun, the whole French line was being driven in, and between Verdun and Paris, it looked as if it would be bent and broken.

Fortunately, however, the Germans were unable to bring into action large masses of troops then available to them. Russia was creating a diversion on the eastern frontier. When the British army was retreating across northern France, the Russians were advancing rapidly through east Prussia, threatening Königsberg in the north, and appearing to clear the way to Posen in the south. In Galicia the Russians were also meeting with success in conflict with the Austrians. The Serbians were not only holding their own, but promising to inflict reverses on their enemies.

At Berlin the Russian advance was creating much alarm. It was taken for granted that all was going well in France and that Paris was on the eve of capitulation. The French army was

about to be broken and the shattered remnants of the British army were doomed to be driven pell-mell to such of the Channel ports as the Germans would permit them to reach. Russia had consequently to be dealt with so that the eastern limits of the German Empire might be freed from the horrors of invasion. When, therefore, great masses of troops which were rushed eastward began to achieve successes, the joy-bells were rung merrily in Germany. Russia was to be defeated, and the defeat of that great Power would shatter the last hope of the Allies and bring the war to a speedy and successful conclusion.

The situation in France, however, was more serious for the Germans than the Allies. When the invaders moved rapidly southward in five great columns, General von Kluck, who commanded the right wing, swept triumphantly through Amiens; but although he had the Channel ports at his mercy, he failed to occupy them. Calais, Dieppe, and Boulogne were undefended and might have been taken almost without a blow. Von Kluck compelled the British to abandon the Boulogne base for that of St. Nazaire on the Bay of Biscay; but he did little more than that. The belief that the British army had received a knock-out blow caused him and the General Staff at Berlin to commit a blunder which was one of the causes of prolonging the war. Instead of making for

the coast, and capturing bases for the German submarines, von Kluck turned southward to take part in the hoped-for investment of Paris.

Then began the battle of the Marne. The right wing of the German armies was "in the air". Joffre saw his opportunity, and prepared to take advantage of it. His chance to turn at bay was made possible by the quick recovery of the British army and the massing of troops in Paris to take part in a flank attack.

Meanwhile, General Foch, in the centre of the French line, prepared to strike a blow which was to have far-reaching effects. "I will retreat no longer," he is said to have informed Joffre, "I am about to attack." When he came to this decision, the Crown Prince's army was across the Marne and a great salient was being formed. Foch met with a speedy success. The Germans were preparing to rest for the night when the French fell upon them, with dash and vigour, and drove them pell-mell across the river. Von Kluck's army, which was advancing towards Paris, was then placed in a position of peril and Joffre let loose on its flank the army concentrated in Paris. Reinforced by the British and fighting with great valour, it drove in the rear-guards which, whether by orders received, or on his own initiative, von Kluck had ventured to press in a south-easterly direction across the Allied front. Evidently he hoped to relieve the

pressure on the Crown Prince's army and break through the Allied centre.

The Germans were taken completely by surprise when they discovered that a flank attack was being made on the right wing. A graphic account is given by an English soldier who was sent with a dispatch to a French general, on the night that the Paris army was being rushed in taxi-cabs (five in a cab) and other vehicles to strike at von Kluck's army. Standing on the top of a small hill, he saw a great mass of Germans in open country. They were extended for two miles between a wood and a river. Suddenly a large number of French and British batteries swept round one side of the wood, taking cover behind a rise of ground about 400 yards distant from the enemy, while thousands of French troops came round the hill on which the private was standing.

A German aeroplane dropped down into the German position and gave the alarm. "There was then a tremendous bustle," wrote the English spectator, "and I could see them digging trenches like madmen." Meanwhile, from the direction of the river, the booming of guns was heard, and the Germans in that direction came rushing to a highway skirting a wood. When within half a mile of it, numerous guns opened fire from between the trees. "The effect was marvellous. The whole mass turned and made for the other Germans who were digging the



trenches." Attempts were made to rally them, and at length broken masses were advancing at a good pace towards the rise that hid the British and French artillery which had been so quietly brought up. "There were hundreds of guns there," wrote the private, "all out of sight, while the mass of French troops that had come from the direction of Paris had halted, and about 2000 only crept into the wood with all the quick-firers they could bring up." The Germans were allowed to advance to about 300 yards from the wood. Then the guns burst forth together. "I saw", continues the narrator, "great lanes in the German ranks, not in the vanguard alone, but in the succeeding masses of men as far as I could see." A panic seized the enemy. So thickly massed were they that they could not open out. "A number started at a run for the wood. I should think a couple of thousand started, but not one of them reached it. Another demoralized horde made for the opposite end, having to run the gauntlet of the French machine-guns for a distance of 500 yards, only to find at the end of their mad rush for safety a French division charging with fixed bayonets." The Germans broke and ran, while artillery on their right and left and Maxims behind them "were raining a hail of death continually". Had cavalry been available few would have escaped.

Von Kluck's perilous movement was a tactical blunder. As has been stated, the German centre was driven in, and his army, outflanked and beaten, had to retreat hurriedly. The battle which began on 6th September lasted until the evening of the 10th. By this time "the Germans", as General French reported, "had been driven back to the line Soissons-Rheims, with a loss of thousands of prisoners, many guns, and enormous masses of transport".

Not since the days of Napoleon had Prussian militarism sustained so heavy a blow. When the German armies fell back on the Aisne, their hopes of a speedy victory were completely shattered and they found themselves faced with the prospect of a long, bitter, and doubtful campaign. A gloom fell on the Fatherland and on the army, which the Kaiser endeavoured to clear by cheerful speeches. "Well, boys," he declared, addressing some of his troops, "before the leaves fall from the trees, we shall all be back in the dear Fatherland."

## CHAPTER IV

### The Struggle for the Channel Ports

Looking back on these early days of the war, one wonders at the confidence in ultimate victory which prevailed at home and on the field of battle, and the wonder is mingled with pride. The victory of the Marne was undoubtedly one of the decisive battles in the great war, but only one of them. It prolonged the struggle and made it possible for France to make good its deficiencies in equipment and organization, and for Britain to raise and train a large army and supply it adequately with the munitions of war. In the interval of preparation terrible risks had to be taken and were taken, and sometimes the issue hung in the balance. But in these dark days the people at home and the soldiers on the battlefield were inspired and made strong by the knowledge that their cause was just and the belief that Right must prevail in the end.

An incident in the battle of the Aisne, which followed the Marne battle, seems now to be symbolical of the great adventure in which the Allies appeared to be engaged. The Germans

had at one point blown up a bridge and only one girder remained. They were being followed at the time by British troops, and fought a stiff rear-guard action. On reaching the river-side, the British soldiers took cover from artillery and machine-gun fire behind the shattered stonework, and it seemed they could never cross the river until pontoons were thrown across it. No engineers were available, and when night fell the Germans deemed themselves safe. Rain was falling in torrents, and searchlights played on the British position so that any attempt to cross might be frustrated from the outset.

The single girder remained. It was wet and slippery, and the Germans never expected it could be made use of. Yet use was made of it. The British officer in command suddenly gave the order to his troops to cross it. "What occurred then," a soldier has narrated, "I don't remember, for it was pitch dark, except where a long beam of a German searchlight cut the darkness, while the noise of the shells and gun-fire was paralyzing. I remember that the girder we had to climb on to was terribly slippery, and how I got across I don't remember, but at last I felt safe when the solid earth on the other side was under my feet. . . . It may seem funny to say that I felt safe with bullets whizzing about and shells screeching overhead, but you would have felt safe any-

where after getting off that bridge, or, rather, what was left of it. . . . On the following day the Germans found our troops entrenched on their side of the river, and the way they showed their disappointment was by a hail of lead. . . . We had some large naval guns brought into action some distance behind the river. Anyway, the shells that were falling from somewhere were bigger either than the French or English heavy artillery, and they played havoc with the Germans who were not deeply entrenched."

For a time it had seemed as if there was nothing but a frail girder between the Allies and disaster. The battle of the Aisne was fought to a standstill. When it ended, the war of movement in that part of France had come to a conclusion for the time being and a long spell of trench warfare began.

Meanwhile the Germans were again moving rapidly in Belgium. Paris was safe, but the seaports of Belgium and northern France were prizes worth snatching so that Britain might be struck at. The Marne disaster had forced upon the Berlin strategists a new plan of campaign, and its first development was the movement towards Antwerp, which was occupied by King Albert and the remnant of his heroic Belgian army.

The great shipping city of Belgium—"the Continental Liverpool"—was defended by a ring of forts, and its inhabitants believed it to

be impregnable. But the Germans brought up giant Austrian howitzers, and when they had driven in the Belgians, who had been maintaining a series of attacks on their lines, the attack on the Antwerp forts was vigorously prosecuted. Under the rain of high-explosives the Belgian defence works were gradually shattered and rendered useless. The German fire was wonderfully accurate, being controlled by observers in balloons. Through the breaches that were made the Germans poured masses of infantry, and the ground was then quickly cleared for the supreme attack on the main line of defences.

The situation was a perilous one not only for the Belgians, but for the French and British forces which were preparing to defend the Channel ports when the Germans would be able to sweep in force towards them. To gain time by prolonging the siege, Britain sent a Marine Brigade and two Naval Brigades, with some heavy naval guns, to assist in the defence of the city during the last week of the attack. The Marines were landed at Ostend and reached Antwerp on 3rd October; the rest of the reinforcements arrived on the 5th and 6th. The defence was stiffened, but Antwerp was already doomed, and could not hold out long enough to allow of further reinforcements being brought up. On the night of the 8th it was being evacuated while shells were falling on the town, and on the following day the Germans

occupied it. Many British and Belgian troops took refuge in Holland, but the main force of the defenders were able to escape along the Belgian coast, the Germans having failed to cut off their retreat.

When, a week later, the Germans were moving towards the coast, the Allies were already in occupation of Ypres, and they were strengthening their lines of defence before Bruges and Ostend were taken. The withdrawal of the Belgian army was protected by the British army under Sir Henry Rawlinson, and when the Belgians and British linked up, they entrenched on the Ypres canal and the Ypres river. The German belief that they had destroyed the Belgian army was one of the several illusions they entertained in these early days of the war.

When Antwerp fell it was decided to withdraw the main British army from the Aisne and send it north to prevent the Germans breaking through to Calais. Already readers of Berlin newspapers were being regaled with optimistic forecasts of future developments in the northern campaign. Calais was to be taken, and then great German guns were to open fire on Dover. Under protection of the hail of shells, forces of German troops were to be sent across the Channel in ships and even on rafts to invade hated England. "God punish England," was the daily prayer of the whole German nation.



### THE MOTOR-BUS ON SERVICE

London omnibuses were largely used for the transport of troops up to the firing line during the early days of the war





A SHELL BURST AMONGST HOUSES

A levy of £20,000,000 had been made upon Antwerp, and several other Belgian towns had been shattered by shells and swept by fire. But terrible as was the punishment meted out to Belgium, a greater punishment awaited England. London was to be made an example of for the whole world. Its great buildings would be laid in ruins, its streets would run with blood, the Bank of England was to be plundered. As Rome fell of old, so would London fall, and as the Goths were enriched by plunder so would the Germans be!

Replaced by French troops in the trenches on the Aisne, the British army was transported in a few days to their new positions in north-eastern France. They detrained just in time. A new French army under General Foch, who had proved his worth in the battle of the Marne, also came into position to co-operate with the British. The Germans, strongly reinforced, were gathering strength, and the great battle known as the first battle of Ypres, soon broke out in all its fury.

The British force was strengthened by Territorial troops from the homeland, and by native Indian soldiers. In all it consisted, however, of only three and a half corps. There were five French corps and four divisions of cavalry, and, in addition, the greatly-reduced but valiant Belgian army. Against this small Allied force came no fewer than fifteen German army corps

and four cavalry corps. The artillery of the Allies was greatly outmatched by that of the enemy. And yet the Germans did not succeed. They were outfought and outgeneralled. The spirit displayed by the British army is something to remember with pride. It had not been shattered by the retreat from Mons, and the Marne victory had increased its determination and confidence. The supreme commander won all hearts by his gallant bearing and spirit of comradeship. "General French", wrote a private to friends at home, "is very popular with his men. There's no side about him, and when he passes along he's just as ready to smile on the ordinary Tommy as on the highest officer. He takes a keen interest in our life in the trenches, and he's dead nuts on the officers who don't take enough interest in their men. . . . He never asks the impossible from us, but always acts as though he could rely on us to get out of a tight corner. He knows we are doing our best for him and the country in this war, and he gives us credit for it. He's not one of your showmen, but a hard fighter from head to toe, and he expects every man under him to be the same. . . . He stops when he has time just to have a chat with us, for the sake of finding out what we think about it all and whether we are being properly looked after."

The stubborn valour and endurance of the

British and French soldiers thwarted the German plan of breaking through and occupying Ypres. Backward and forward swung the battle line, but it could not be broken. Time and again the issue hung in the balance. The Germans, however, although in superior strength, were unable to achieve their purpose, and having failed to reach their objectives were undoubtedly defeated. They searched every part of the Allied line for a weak spot. At first they expressed great contempt for the Indians. But they soon learned to respect them as fighting men. Indeed, they learned to fear them. A German soldier has given in a letter a vivid impression of one of the early attacks made by the fighting men from the East. "With fearful shouting," he wrote, "thousands of those brown forms rushed upon us suddenly as if they were shot out of a fog, so that at first we were taken completely by surprise. At 100 yards we opened a destructive fire, which mowed down hundreds; but in spite of that the others advanced, springing forward like cats and surmounting obstacles with unexampled agility. In no time they were in our trenches, and truly these brown enemies were not to be despised. With butt-ends, bayonets, swords and daggers, we fought each other, and we had bitter hard work, which, however, was lightened by reinforcements that arrived quickly, before we drove the fellows out of the trenches."

Night attacks to the south of Ypres by stealthy Pathans, Gurkhas, and Sikhs struck terror among the Germans. The Indians often fought silently with cold steel in the darkness, and more than once they anticipated German night attacks, preventing them from taking place. The Territorials also exceeded all expectations, and proved to be eminently worthy to fight side by side with the gallant and steadfast men of the old army, the backbone of the British defence. Under General Foch the French did magnificent work, while the Belgians, commanded and inspired by King Albert in person, not only held their own but stiffened their resistance.

The great battle continued well into November, and as winter came on the Germans had to face the fact that their first great effort to break through was in vain. They wreaked their vengeance on the town of Ypres, which was constantly shelled. If they could not reach it, they were determined to wreck it.

It was on 22nd November that the Germans set themselves to destroy the town. A stream of shells was poured into the Central Market Square, and the Cloth Hall and Cathedral, two historical buildings, were set on fire and pounded to ruins. The bombardment by heavy guns was directed by observers in a captive balloon. "This magnificent old city of Ypres", wrote a Frenchman at the time, "was condemned to

death on the day when the German Emperor was forced to renounce the hope of making an entry into it."

The shattering of the carefully-planned German offensive in the second fortnight of November was followed by a period of winter trench fighting. Reinforced by drafts from home the British troops emerged from the struggle "with a sense of their superiority over the enemy", as a military writer put it at the time, "and with absolute confidence of ultimate victory".

Recruiting for the new armies progressed rapidly in Britain, and the greatest enthusiasm was displayed by the men who were being trained for service at the front.

It began to be realized in Germany that Britain was in earnest. "There could be no greater error", wrote a critic in a Hamburg newspaper, "than to underestimate the importance of the war with Britain. In all the wars she has waged in the past Britain has fought with persistence and endurance, which qualities will doubtless be again revealed in the present struggle. . . . We know that the entire world is looking on at this war between Germany and Britain. The country which goes under in this struggle will lose beyond all words in the estimation of the whole world, while its fall will add power and prestige to the victor. The recognition of the fact that the victory of Britain would destroy Germany's future for centuries to

come must spur us on to the greatest efforts and sacrifices. A German defeat, apart from any war indemnity with which future generations might be burdened, would in all probability so cripple our resources that we should no longer be able even to contemplate the reconstruction of our military and economic forces, or the creation of a fleet to vie with that of Great Britain—our most pressing need in the future."

## CHAPTER V

### British Victories on the Seas

The Germans expected great things of their navy before the outbreak of war. It was built to win for them the mastery of the seas, and the Kaiser declared himself once, in a message to the Tsar of Russia, "The Admiral of the Atlantic". There can be no doubt that the navy party in Germany had dreams of the day when Germany would "rule the waves" and the Kaiser would be the "Admiral of all the Oceans". But one great obstacle stood in the way of German hopes of achieving supremacy at sea, and that was the British navy.

As soon as war was declared, the British navy closed the North Sea and thus prevented the German "Admiral of the Atlantic" from sending a fleet into that ocean from a German port. The main forces of the German navy were concentrated in the Kiel Canal, which connects the Baltic at Kiel with the North Sea at Heligoland Bight. Having made provision to guard the Straits of Dover in the south and "screened" the northern outlet of the North Sea, Admiral



Jellicoe, Commander-in-Chief of the British Grand Fleet, made provision to keep watch on Heligoland Bight and the mouth of the Baltic Sea.

Mines were laid in the North Sea by the British and the Germans, not only to protect harbours but to intercept warships on the high seas. The first loss sustained by the British navy was the cruiser *Amphion*, which struck a German mine on the morning of 6th August. She had previously sunk the German mine-layer *Königin Luise*.

While watch was being kept on the main German fleet, so that it might neither operate freely in the North Sea nor reach the Atlantic, the Mediterranean Sea had to be cleared. The German battleship *Goeben* and the cruiser *Breslau* were in these waters, and arrangements were made by the naval authorities of Britain and France to "round them up". They were prevented from entering Austrian waters in the Adriatic, but escaped to the Dardanelles. Then it was announced that Turkey had purchased them. A few German liners, which had been converted into commerce-destroyers, were operating in the Atlantic. The *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse* was one of these, and had a brief career, being sunk by H.M.S. *Higflyer*, a light cruiser. Other German vessels — the cruisers *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Emden*—

were in Pacific waters, and had to be disposed of. But before the seas were cleared of these units of the German fleet, the first important naval action occurred in northern waters. It was fought off the German coast in Heligoland Bight three weeks after war was declared, and emphasized the fact that the fighting qualities of the British navy had in no way suffered decline.

Protected by mine-fields and the fortified island of Heligoland, the German fleet lay secure in the upper part of the Bight. As it declined to come out, the British navy men attempted to draw it out. Accordingly, a "sweeping movement" was planned, the object of which was to compel the Germans to accept battle.

On the morning of 28th August, which was calm and misty, a British naval force, under the command of Admiral Sir David Beatty, made a bold attack in Heligoland Bight. First a number of British submarines crept into German waters. They drew out a number of enemy destroyers. These were being waited for by a British destroyer flotilla led by the *Arethusa*, a "destroyer of destroyers", and another destroyer flotilla led by the *Fearless*.

When the German destroyers were thus drawn out, the British flotillas darted through the mist to attack them. A lively "running fight" ensued. German cruisers were compelled to

hasten to the aid of the destroyers, and these had to contend with a British light cruiser squadron which was supported by a battle-cruiser squadron led by the *Lion*, Admiral Beatty's flagship.

The *Arethusa* opened fire on the German destroyers at long range, and hammered them so badly that they soon scattered in flight. A German cruiser from Heligoland hove in sight. The daring *Arethusa* had superior speed, however, and, being armed with 6-inch guns, did not hesitate to give battle to the larger vessel, aided by destroyers, which manœuvred with the intention of using their torpedoes. As the *Arethusa* was able to dodge the cruiser's broadsides, another German cruiser had to steam out and take part in the fight. After a brisk and serious battle of over half an hour both cruisers found it necessary to retire from the *Arethusa* and *Fearless*.

Meanwhile, the active British destroyers were doing great things. A German destroyer which tried to escape to Heligoland was swiftly followed and suddenly brought up by a well-directed round. Then she was riddled with shell until fire broke out, and her crew began to leap into the sea. As the British sailors were engaged in rescuing them, a German cruiser came up and opened fire, so that their ship, the *Defender*, had to move away, leaving the men in the whale boat twenty-five miles distant from

land and surrounded by a fog. Suddenly the British submarine, E 4, rose near the boat and took them all on board to convey them home—a distance of 250 miles.

The *Arethusa* and *Fearless*, having chased away two German cruisers, were attacked by a third which, however, had to retire badly crippled. A fourth German cruiser, the *Mainz*, next came up and opened fire on the two light vessels, which replied with fine effect, although the *Arethusa* was by this time badly crippled. Not long after this engagement opened, however, some cruisers of the "Town class" came swiftly out of the fog. Any one of them was a match for three of the *Mainz*s. Before long the German cruiser was "reduced to a piteous mass of unrecognizability", relates an eyewitness, "wreathed in black fumes from which flared out angry goutts of fire as an unending stream of hundred-pound shells burst on board. . . . The last I saw of the *Mainz* was an absolute wreck, her whole midships a fuming inferno." Before the flaming vessel sank, the survivors of its crew leapt overboard, and about 300 were rescued by British tars.

Other German cruisers had meanwhile come into action. But Beatty's battle-cruiser squadron had arrived. "Great and grim and uncouth as some antediluvian monsters, how solid they looked, how utterly earth-quaking", wrote an officer on a destroyer at the time. The *Lion*

chased a "two-funnelled" cruiser and soon had her burning furiously and in a sinking condition. It was not safe for the battle cruisers to press home the attack, however, on account of floating mines. They were consequently turned northward. The *Lion* soon sighted another German cruiser, which was trying to steal away through the mist, and sank her with a couple of salvos.

Soon the battle came to an end. Most of the German vessels had been badly injured, and five had been sunk. The British vessels returned, the *Arethusa* being taken in tow by the cruiser *Hogue*.

A few days after this "sweep", a British submarine sank a German cruiser and destroyer in Heligoland Bight. In mid-September, during rough weather, a German submarine sank in the North Sea the British cruisers *Aboukir*, *Hogue*, and *Cressy*.

Meanwhile the German cruiser *Emden* was giving trouble in the East. She suddenly appeared in the Bay of Bengal, and captured some British traders. On 22nd September she bombarded Madras, but was beaten off by the forts. She afterwards sank a Japanese liner, and next appeared off the town of Penang, on Prince of Wales Island, when she sank a Russian cruiser at anchor in the bay and a French torpedo-boat that endeavoured to get within range.

Several cruisers were meanwhile searching for the *Emden*, which was at length caught up at the Cocos or Keeling group of islands in the Indian Ocean by the Australian cruiser H.M.S. *Sydney*. A brisk running fight began at 9.40 a.m., and before it ended about fifty-six miles were covered in manœuvring. The *Sydney* had superior speed and guns of longer range, and was cleverly handled by her commander. Early in the fight one of the *Emden's* masts was shot away. Firing furiously she, however, continued her flight. But it was hopeless to attempt to escape from the *Sydney*. The German vessel was battered terribly; shell holes gaped in her sides, and her decks were ripped like paper. "I could see our shells hitting the *Emden*," wrote an eyewitness, "and she was one mass of yellow fumes from the lyddite. Then she began to burn furiously, and had only two out of her ten guns firing. She had lost two funnels." In the end the *Emden* was run on the beach of North Keeling Island at a speed of 19 knots, the shock killing the man at the wheel. The vessel had been "riddled like a sieve".

The German Pacific squadron had yet to be accounted for. In the month of November it appeared off the coast of Chile. It consisted of five cruisers, the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Nürnberg*, *Dresden*, and *Leipzig*, under the command of Admiral Graf von Spee.

A British squadron, consisting of the *Good Hope*, *Monmouth*, *Glasgow*, and *Otranto*, under command of Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, came into touch with the superior German force on a Sunday. A southward chase took place until evening came on. When the sun went down the Germans were nearest the coast, and blurred by the haze, while the British war-ships stood out sharply against the western horizon. A brief battle began at twenty minutes to seven. From the outset the Germans had the advantage in guns and in visibility. The *Good Hope* was badly struck, and began to blaze. Fire broke out on the *Monmouth* also. The battle continued to wage fiercely, but the fire reached the magazine of the *Good Hope*, which blew up, her funnels being tossed high into the air, while the flames of the explosion rose over 200 feet. Very shortly afterwards she went down.

The Germans then concentrated their fire on the *Monmouth*, which was repeatedly hit, and in consequence became quite unmanageable. Her captain had decided to fight till the end, so as to allow the *Glasgow* to escape. The *Glasgow* went away reluctantly. "It is an awful thing that a British ship should desert another," wrote an officer of the *Glasgow*, "but it was necessary that it should do so. The burning *Monmouth* blew up like the *Good Hope*, and vanished beneath the waves. The *Glasgow's* crew saw through the darkness the

simultaneous flashes of no fewer than seventy-five guns. This was the final attack on the *Monmouth*, which immediately went to her doom with all hands. But the *Glasgow* and *Otranto* withdrew under the cover of night."

This disaster came as a painful surprise to the British people, who had been inclined to under-rate the German navy, and not a few expressed their astonishment that the Germans should have been able to concentrate a stronger squadron than ourselves in the southern Pacific.

As a result of the battle, British sea-power in the southern Atlantic was threatened. The Germans, it was recognized, were certain to follow up their success by coming round Cape Horn for the purpose of intercepting trading vessels and transports, which would fall a ready prey to their guns.

There was much alarm in the Falkland Islands and especially at Port Stanley, the coaling station, whither hastened the *Glasgow*, and the pre-Dreadnought battleship *Canopus*, which Admiral Cradock had left in the vicinity of Cape Horn, on account of her slowness, when he scouted in quest of the Germans. The alarm was well-founded. Admiral von Spee had resolved to seize Port Stanley for the purpose of securing supplies and using it as a base for future operations.

Preparations were accordingly made to defend the port. The *Glasgow* having proceeded



to Rio de Janeiro, guns were landed from the *Canopus*, and a volunteer force was mustered to oppose any attempt to effect a landing.

Early in December events took a happier turn. A strong British squadron suddenly made a dramatic and unexpected appearance in the harbour. When news had been received of the sinking of the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, the Admiralty gave a secret order to Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee to proceed from home waters to the Falklands with the Dreadnought-cruisers *Invincible* (flagship) and the *Inflexible*. These powerful vessels were each armed with eight 12-inch guns and could steam at 28 knots. The German cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* carried 8.2-inch and 5.9-inch guns. They had sixteen 8.2-inch guns against the sixteen 12-inch of the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*. The coming decision depended on the ability to reach the battle-ground in time with the largest guns and the fastest ships. As it proved, Britain was in time with her great vessels.

With the Dreadnought-cruisers came the *Glasgow*, which had been hurriedly repaired at Rio de Janeiro, the cruisers *Bristol*, *Carnarvon*, *Kent*, and *Cornwall*, and the converted cruiser, *Macedonia*, all of which had been collected from various points.

The Falklands people were living in hourly dread that the Germans were coming, and



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### MONITORS OFF THE BELGIAN COAST

These light draught vessels were built for Brazil, but were taken over by the British Government, and used in the bombardment of the German flag on the



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# OFF CUNHALEN, CHRISTMAS DAY, 1914

During the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, 1914, the ship was at sea.

all the women and children had been sent away from Port Stanley. It was a great surprise and joy to them, therefore, when the powerful British squadron arrived on 7th December. It had come just in the nick of time, for on the very next morning the German vessels hove in sight.

Admiral Sturdee allowed them to run into the trap that had been prepared for them. They had no idea that Britain was prepared at Port Stanley to avenge the sinking of the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*.

The *Scharnhorst* and *Nürnberg* came boldly towards the southern shore of Stanley peninsula to wreck the wireless station. As they drew near, the *Canopus* opened fire with five rounds of 12-inch shell across that tongue of land which concealed the British squadron. This was the first surprise. One shell nearly struck the flagship, and the enemy at once sheered off.

Soon afterwards the British vessels steamed out of the harbour. The *Kent* and *Glasgow* were leading, and when they were sighted the German admiral hoisted a challenge to fight. The big cruisers which followed used oil fuel to enshroud themselves in dense clouds of smoke so that the enemy might not be able to identify them.

"It was a glorious bright day," writes an eyewitness, who was on shore, "and from

the hill at the back of the town it was a sight never to be forgotten and probably unique to see the five German vessels steaming along in a line parallel with our six ships, and presently making every attempt to escape. They were all in sight for a couple of hours, and as the Germans had a start of ten or fifteen miles it took some hours to catch them."

It was when the Germans saw the battle-cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* that "they turned tail and steamed for their lives", as another eyewitness put it. Escape was, however, impossible. The *Leipzig* was struck at long range and immediately turned away to the south-west with the *Nürnberg* and *Dresden*, to be pursued by three of the smaller British cruisers.

Meanwhile, the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* went after the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, hammering them fiercely with long-range guns. It was an exciting chase. The *Scharnhorst* was one of the best gunnery ships in the German navy and fought well on that fateful day. In the first stage of the battle she hit the *Invincible* three times and the *Invincible* did the same to her. But before long she was, as a midshipman has written, "utterly out-mancœuvred, out-gunned, and out-matched". As the vessels drew closer the *Invincible* hit the *Scharnhorst* again and again. "First", the midshipman tells, "our left gun sent her

big crane spinning over the side. Then our right gun blew her funnel to atoms, and then another shot from the left gun sent her bridge and part of her forecastle sky-high."

The chase was exciting indeed, and went on for several hours. Once or twice the *Invincible* was hit. British shells that fell short raised big columns of spray that hid the enemy for some seconds, but as the distance between the vessels grew less, the misses were few. "We were hitting the *Scharnhorst* nearly every time," continues the midshipman. "A beauty from our right gun got one of their turrets fair and square and sent it whizzing over the side." The end came soon after that. It was seen that the *Scharnhorst* was down at the bows and on fire amidships. At 4.17 p.m. she was perceived, through a cloud of smoke, to roll over on her side, her propellers lashing the water into foam. "Then she capsized altogether and went to the bottom." Thus did the German flagship, which had bombarded the helpless *Monmouth* a month before, go suddenly to her doom, with Admiral von Spee and 900 officers and men. It was impossible to save a single man.

For some time longer the *Gneisenau*, which had been struggling to escape from the *Inflexible*, continued to wage a running battle. The *Invincible* went to the assistance of her sister-ship with her great guns belching rapidly.

Soon the German vessel was seen to be listing to port and burning furiously. "The first funnel was down," writes our midshipman, "and she was an absolute shambles, her turrets in splinters and her guns twisted into corkscrews. . . . She slowly heeled over to port and then capsized just ahead of us. You could see her side. It looked like a huge whale's back."

British boats were promptly launched to rescue the Germans in the water who were "sending up piteous cries for help". About 300 of them were rescued, including the captain—"a tall man with a black beard".

In the meantime the *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* had sunk the *Leipzig*. The *Kent* had vanished completely in pursuit of the *Nürnberg*. She failed to return to Port Stanley with the other British vessels that evening, nor did any reply come to the wireless messages which were sent out to locate her. The operators kept repeating, *Kent, Kent, Kent, Kent*, all night. It was feared by some that the cruiser was lost. Next morning, however, she arrived in the harbour, and reported having sunk the *Nürnberg*. Her wireless apparatus had been destroyed during the running fight. The *Kent* was a 21-knot cruiser and the *Nürnberg* a 25-knot one. But the *Kent* got up a speed of 24 knots by using all her boats, and even her arm-chairs, for fuel.

## BRITISH VICTORIES ON THE SEAS 69

Great gallantry was displayed by the British officers and men in this memorable battle, which shattered German hopes of carrying out a plan made several years before. This was to strike blows at British power on the high seas, so as to compel our fleet to scatter in search of raiders and thus prevent a strong blockade being maintained in the North Sea.

This Falklands victory was consequently keenly felt in Germany, and an attempt was made to restore national self-esteem by an attack on defenceless places and non-combatants on the English coast. On 3rd November, two days after the sinking of the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* off Coronel, a squadron of German cruisers stole across the North Sea and attacked the *Halcyon*, a coastguard gunboat patrol off Yarmouth, and in the hurried retreat scattered mines, one of which destroyed a British submarine. Eight days after the Falklands battle came the second raid. On the morning of 16th December, German cruisers made a demonstration on the Yorkshire coast and shelled Hartlepool, Whitby, and Scarborough. At Scarborough about 500 shells were fired by a battle-cruiser and an armoured cruiser. St. Martin's Church, in which Holy Communion was being celebrated, was struck by two shells, but the congregation remained calm. Hotels and private houses were damaged. A postman



was killed on his rounds, as were also men going to work and children on their way to school. Not a few marvellous escapes were reported at the time. A shell, for instance, passed through a room as the inmates were about to partake of breakfast. In another case a lady had just left her drawing-room when a shell burst through it. At Hartlepool the Corporation gasworks were set on fire, and a number of industrial works were damaged. Many people were killed and injured. At Whitby the historic Abbey was struck, and a good deal of property was destroyed.

A British patrol squadron tried to cut off the raiders, but as soon as it was sighted the Germans retreated at full speed and escaped in the mist.

On Christmas Day a British air raid took place on Cuxhaven, and our cruisers and submarines made a bold demonstration in Heligoland Bight, emphasizing the fact that the German claim regarding freedom of movement in the North Sea was not only exaggerated but fictitious.

On 24th January, 1915, another German attack on the English coast was planned to take place. But on this occasion the attempt was frustrated. It was a Sunday morning and, as it chanced, Sir David Beatty had left the Firth of Forth on Saturday night with a battle-cruiser squadron of five vessels—the *Lion* (flag-

ship), the *Tiger*, the *Princess Royal*, the *New Zealand*, and the *Indomitable*. When well out to sea this strong squadron was met and joined by a flotilla of light cruisers and destroyers.

The British vessels were steaming in the darkness with lights out. An officer in a destroyer, which was scouting in the North Sea, tells that at 7 a.m. they sighted some cruisers on the starboard bow. "As the light got better", he says, "we made out the enemy battle-cruisers. . . . A bit later we made out some heavy ships on our port side (we were steaming north). These might have been Germans for all we knew. The German ships came on for a bit as we were screening the big ships, being between them and the enemy, but as soon as they caught sight of the *Lion* and that lot, they altered their course sixteen points and made off towards the Fatherland as quickly as they could. We realized then that we should see some very pretty firing and something rather out of the common, as for the first time during the war our latest super-Dreadnoughts were going to be pitted against theirs, and the numbers on either side were more or less equal. . . . This was about 8 a.m. . . ."

The German battle fleet, attended by light cruisers, consisted of the *Blücher*, the *Moltke*, the *Scydlitz*, and the *Derfflinger*. These vessels were steaming at about three-quarter

speed, expecting, apparently, to reach the English coast unchallenged, when they saw the British squadron racing towards them at full speed. Without delay, as has been stated, they took to flight, heavy smoke pouring from their funnels. The stokers had received sudden orders to get up full speed.

The British vessels were faster, however, and gradually they crept nearer the enemy. In front was the *Lion*, which opened fire on the *Blücher*, the rearmost vessel in the German line. This was but a momentary attack, for the *Lion* passed on to engage the *Derfflinger*, while the *Tiger* pressed towards the *Seydlitz*, and the *Princess Royal* sought the *Moltke*. The *New Zealand* meanwhile engaged the *Blücher*.

Southward raced the mighty vessels, their guns booming rapidly over the sea. The day was clear, and the chase was a stern and exciting one. The *Derfflinger* was badly hit and set on fire, which broke out on the *Moltke* also. The *Blücher* was heavily battered by the *New Zealand* and soon became a shapeless mass, her decks being ripped and shattered, her funnels shot away, and all her guns, save one, put out of action. As the *Tiger* came up with her she discharged one 13.5 gun, and the *Blücher's* fore turret "was", an eyewitness relates, "pushed right over the side—turret, guns, mountings and men, they all went—leaving a yawning gap in the *Blücher's* deck".

By this time the fight had gone on for nearly a hundred miles. Beatty was trying to "head off" the enemy, and the German admiral consequently changed his course. In doing so the broadsides of his fleet were exposed, allowing more of the British guns to come into action. Unfortunately the *Lion* was crippled by a German shell which damaged her "feed tank", causing her to drop out of the line on account of loss of speed. Beatty at once boarded a destroyer, and transferred to the *Princess Royal*, which became the flagship. But for this mishap to the *Lion*, the Germans would have been more severely punished than they were.

In the last stage of the chase, the enemy reached a zone protected by floating mines and swarming with their submarines, and the pursuit had to be given up. Two of the three German cruisers went off burning furiously and badly battered.

Meanwhile the *Blücher* was continuing its hopeless battle with the *New Zealand*. A Zeppelin came out from Heligoland, and mistaking her for a British vessel dropped bombs on her deck. The *Indomitable* was ordered to deal with her in the end, and the *Arethusa* delivered a torpedo attack and struck her.

Her end came suddenly at the last. With a lurch she rolled over on to her beam ends, the crew swarming from the deck along her slip-

pery side, and then in a burst of steam and smoke she went down, leaving many men struggling in the water. British destroyers raced up and began to pick up the struggling German sailors. While they were thus engaged, the German airship overhead dropped bombs, hampering the work of rescuing the drowning men.

In addition to the *Blücher*, the German light cruiser *Kolberg* was sunk early in the fight by shells from the British battle-cruisers.

The loss of the *Blücher* and the damage done to the other vessels was a heavy blow to the German navy. Yet the enemy tried to minimize the victory by claiming that a British cruiser had been sunk. Apparently the Zeppelin crew believed that the *Blücher* was a British vessel. It was so badly battered that they must have failed to recognize it.

This action was an effective reply to the raids on defenceless towns on the English coast; it also emphasized the superiority of the British fleet in action. It was quite evident that if the raiding cruisers had not sought safety in flight not a single one of them would have escaped destruction on that memorable Sunday morning.

## CHAPTER VI

### Winter Fighting and Christmas Greetings

After the Germans had been baffled in their attempt to seize the Channel ports, a spell of winter trench-fighting set in, and the question was asked in various countries: "How long will the war last?" To an American interviewer Lord Kitchener answered: "Not less than three years. It will end only when Germany is thoroughly defeated, not before—defeated on land and sea. That the Allies will win is certain. That for us to win will require a minimum period of three years is, I think, probable. It might last longer, it might end sooner. It can end in only one way. If Germany gives up sooner so much the better for Germany and for us, and for the world. If three years are required for the undertaking, or more than three years, the world will find that we for our part are prepared to go on, determined to go on, certain to go on. In any

event, the war can have but one outcome—one ultimate conclusion.”

When these brave words were spoken Germany had larger and better-equipped forces and more artillery than the Allies. “The marvelous fighting power and the indomitable courage and tenacity” of the British army had, as General French acknowledged at the time, frustrated the enemy’s attempts to break through on the north.

The French held their lines with success at all points except to the north-east of Soissons. Russia had been forced to retreat in East Prussia, but had temporarily checked the German offensive in Poland, while its own offensive in Galicia and the Carpathians was being successfully continued. Turkey had entered the war as an ally of Germany and Austria early in November, and was being worsted in the Caucasus with heavy losses. The Japanese captured the German-Chinese port of Tsintau in November. Great gallantry was meanwhile being displayed by the Serbians. The Austrians captured Belgrade, the Serbian capital, on 2nd December, but after a hard-fought battle, in which they were worsted, they had to retreat, and Belgrade was recaptured by the Serbians on 14th December.

On the Western front the British soldiers had to endure great hardships, and they endured them cheerfully. The Germans shelled them

continually, not only in the trenches but far behind them. A captain of artillery relates an incident which illustrates the fearlessness of our soldiers. One afternoon shells began to fall near a highway. "There were some Tommies playing football in a field close by," he writes, "but they took no notice, and proceeded with their game as if nothing had happened. . . . The whole road was torn up and rendered absolutely impassable."

Spies infested the countryside. A story is told of one who was found in a church clock tower. "It was observed", writes a private, "that the hands of the church clock were behaving in a suspicious manner—at one time it was 6.15, and then a few minutes later it had changed 10 or 20 minutes. Someone was inside signalling the range to the German artillery." The church was entered, and the spy shot while adjusting the clock.

Other spies occasionally appeared in the British lines wearing the uniforms of fallen British officers. They not only tried to obtain information, but were known to have even given orders. Many stories are told of how they were detected and arrested.

Describing life in the trenches under winter conditions General French wrote in a dispatch: "Frost and snow have alternated with periods of continuous rain. The men have been called upon to stand for many hours together almost



up to their waists in bitterly cold water, only separated by one or two hundred yards from a most vigilant enemy."

"At present we are resting," wrote an officer to relatives at home, "and verily in need of it, for fourteen days or more without three hours of sleep running exhaust a man rather much, especially when the weather is not too good. Just imagine a waterproof-sheet pegged down over the edge of a ditch about 4 feet deep, a little straw at the bottom—wet straw—and you have my home; your greatcoat wet, of course, boots, clothes, and face, and hair all clogged with mud, and there you have the infantry—officer and man—complete. Add to that a dash of happy-go-luckiness, a large dose of cheeriness and joking, and the picture is complete."

"Figure to yourself", another wrote, "a country of flat ploughed field, pollard willows, and deep muddy ditches. Then we come along and 'dig ourselves in'. . . . Little caves are scooped in the walls of the trenches, where the men live about four to the hole. . . . The pluck of these men is perfectly extraordinary, and the placid way life goes on under the risk of being sniped or shelled at any moment is quite past belief." A private wrote: "In spite of snow, and rain, and mud, we are merry and bright. Whenever we are at rest we get up concerts."

The Indians shared in the terrible life amidst

mud and snow. "At their own particular request," wrote General French, "they have taken their turn in the trenches, and performed most useful and valuable service."

Night raids on the enemy were frequent and invariably successful, and in these the Indians displayed special qualities. Often they crept into the German trenches and fought silently with knives, returning with spoils frequently including excellent pairs of boots, which were much appreciated by the "Tommies".

Many conflicts took place between aeroplanes, and in these the British established a mastery, often against odds.

On Christmas Day there was "a soldiers' truce". The Germans left their trenches at various points on the line and exchanged cigarettes with the British soldiers. "Christmas was very misty," wrote one officer, "and out came those Germans to wish us 'a happy day'. We went out and told them we were at war with them, and that really they must play the game and pretend to fight. They went back, but again attempted to come towards us, so we fired over their heads, and the rest of the day passed quietly in this part of the line." At other points there was a general exchange of Christmas greetings. Some Germans had wonderful news to give. "They said", one officer tells, "that Russia had been completely wiped out, and that they weren't going to bother us till 1st

January, when their Eastern army would have returned, and then they were going to wipe us off the face of the earth. We roared with laughter, but they were quite serious about it, and evidently believed it all." During this remarkable truce the dead warriors lying in "No Man's Land" were buried.



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FIELD-MARSHAL SIR DOUGLAS HAIG  
Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in France and Flanders



Official Photograph

ADMIRAL SIR DAVID BEATTY

## CHAPTER VII

### British Army takes Offensive

The desultory fighting went on until early in March, when the British took the offensive and captured the village of Neuve Chapelle. This battle was fought on the 10th, 11th, and 12th March. There were several reasons for waging it. At the time the Russians were being heavily attacked by Hindenburg, and it was consequently important to hold as many German troops as possible on the Western front. With this end in view the French were also taking the offensive at Arras and Champagne. General French was impressed withal by "the need of fostering the offensive spirit in the troops" under his command, "after the trying and possibly enervating experiences which they had gone through of a severe winter in the trenches".

The British offensive was a surprise to the Germans. It was carefully prepared at a time when the enemy airmen were being kept well behind their own lines. First came a heavy bombardment by British guns, which began as dawn was breaking. It was directed against

the German trenches, and intended to render them difficult to hold, and also to clear away the barbed wire entanglements. Then the infantry pressed forward while the village was being shelled by the heavy guns.

Except to the north, where the wire was not sufficiently cleared, the infantry attack was successful and made according to the time-table. An eyewitness has told that not only were the Germans surprised at the dash displayed by Indian and British troops; even the British artillerymen were astonished by the success of the infantry. "Suddenly", says the eyewitness, "I find a battery not firing, with a subaltern standing in the road. I pause and inquire the reason for this phenomenon. He tells me cheerily enough that his battery had been covering the ground up to the enemy's third line of trenches and that they had to stop firing as our infantry were up to it. Then an almost speechless sergeant-major dashed out of the artillery brigade head-quarters and managed to stammer out, '—th Division have got into Neuve Chapelle'. . . . Then I hear they have passed beyond the village and their reports of captured guns. . . . Next a novel patch on the road catches my eye. I hurry on and the grey line resolves itself into a batch of German prisoners."

The importance of the operation was that it showed the German line could be broken by

our gallant soldiers if sufficient artillery were massed to clear away the barbed-wire entanglements, and that, man to man, the enemy was no match for the British. It also showed that the Territorials made excellent soldiers. Like the Regulars they established a moral superiority over the Germans.

About 6000 Germans were killed and 2000 taken prisoners in this brilliant little action. By capturing the village and the elaborate trenches near it, the British position was greatly strengthened. The main attack was delivered by troops of the First Army under the command of Sir Douglas Haig, who was specially praised in General French's dispatch.



## CHAPTER VIII

### The Second Battle of Ypres

The next battle was of greater importance. It is known as the "Second Battle of Ypres", for it was the second attempt made by the Germans to capture Ypres and break through the Allied lines so as to gain possession of the Channel ports. They failed although they were in superior numbers and much better equipped with artillery, and in spite of the fact that they introduced a staggering surprise in the form of poison gas, which was used in this battle for the first time. The British held Ypres and inflicted such losses on the enemy that they were unable to follow up the initial successes they managed to gain.

When the battle opened in the third week of April, the Germans were about 5 miles distant from Ypres. From the morning of the 20th until the evening of the 22nd, they kept up a severe artillery bombardment on Ypres and the British and French trenches. A commanding position known as Hill 60 had been captured by the British on 17th April, and the

enemy attempted to re-take it on the 20th, and on several succeeding days, without success.

The first gas attack was made farther north, between Bixschoote and Langemarck, where the Canadians were entrenched, with French African troops on the left. About five o'clock in the evening, while a heavy artillery attack was in progress, a great cloud of thick vapour was seen drifting on the wind from the German trenches. It came on in stupendous volume. At first the defenders were puzzled by it, but when the fumes reached them they realized only too well that a new and terrible method of warfare had been introduced. The French colonial troops were seized with panic, as those who had inhaled the deadly fumes struggled in a state of suffocation and collapsed never to rise again, while others ran about clutching at their throats. The survivors fled, leaving the French and British artillery unprotected. A great gap was thus left in the line; for a time it was 5 miles in breadth. The enemy had opened a door through which they hoped to make entry into Ypres.

Fortunately, however, the Germans did not take full advantage of the success they had achieved. The Canadians had remained firm, although their left was "in the air". In making their advance, the enemy endeavoured to outflank and break through the Canadians, but during the night they met with such fierce

opposition that their progress was not only crippled but held up. Meanwhile troops were being rushed forward to fill the gap through which the Germans had advanced and entrenched themselves.

The story of the Canadian stand is one of the most thrilling in the annals of the war. These brave and steadfast soldiers from the great Dominion undoubtedly saved the situation. They fought magnificently all night and during the next day, bending their line on the left to reduce the gap, while pounded by shells, and again and again subjected to gas attacks. Each time the Germans came on they were driven back by "screens" of rifle-fire. On their left the Canadians even took part in a successful counter-attack, supporting reinforcements which had been rushed forward. It was not until twenty-four hours after the first gas attack was made that the gap was closed against the enemy by a thin line of troops. During the night the defenders advanced somewhat and improved their position.

On the morning of the next day great volumes of gas were released by the Germans and a part of the Canadian line had to fall back, so that a salient was formed. The Germans pressed forward and fierce hand-to-hand fighting took place. A detachment of Canadians was isolated at St. Julien village and fought until their ammunition was exhausted. But

the line which had been bent could not be broken.

This day, the 24th, was the most critical one in the Second Battle of Ypres. The German artillery roared constantly from dawn till sunset, and, at parts of the line, the defending troops became mixed up. When darkness came on, the worst was over. The fighting was to go on for several more days, but reinforcements were arriving quickly and the German assaults were being met with increasing strength and resistance. On the 25th the fighting was at the height of its fury, but it was found possible to relieve the wearied Canadians. As they were drawn out the British Regulars cheered them enthusiastically. They had lost nearly half of their numbers but they had thwarted the German plan.

On the 26th the French advanced somewhat, while the Indians were baffled by gas clouds in a gallant charge against an enemy position.

Day after day the battle line surged forward and backward, any German success being achieved chiefly by the free use of gas. On 3rd and 4th May the British position was contracted and thus strengthened, although it involved the loss of about two miles of ground on the north-east of Ypres. Further slight contractions were ultimately made, but the line remained firm. By 14th May the Germans, who had sustained terrible losses, showed signs

of exhaustion. Ten days later they released tremendous clouds of gas, but although they gained some ground they were unable to break through and had to abandon the attempt to capture Ypres. They had sustained heavy losses but had gained little in return.

In the story of the long battle no phase of it is more impressive than the struggle for Hill 60. The Germans "plastered it" with shells, and again and again delivered determined attacks, but were thwarted by our gallant men. Then on 1st May they tried gas. It was released on a gentle wind which sent the cloud crawling up the hill, completely enveloping it. The Dorsets clung to the trenches and the great majority were suffocated. But before the Germans could follow their gas, other English troops occupied the trenches. Many of the gasping survivors of the cloud attack died soon afterwards. Another gas attack took place a few days later and the Germans succeeded in reaching the summit. But for the gas "the enemy's attack on 5th May", reported General French, "would most certainly have shared the fate of all the many previous attacks he had made".

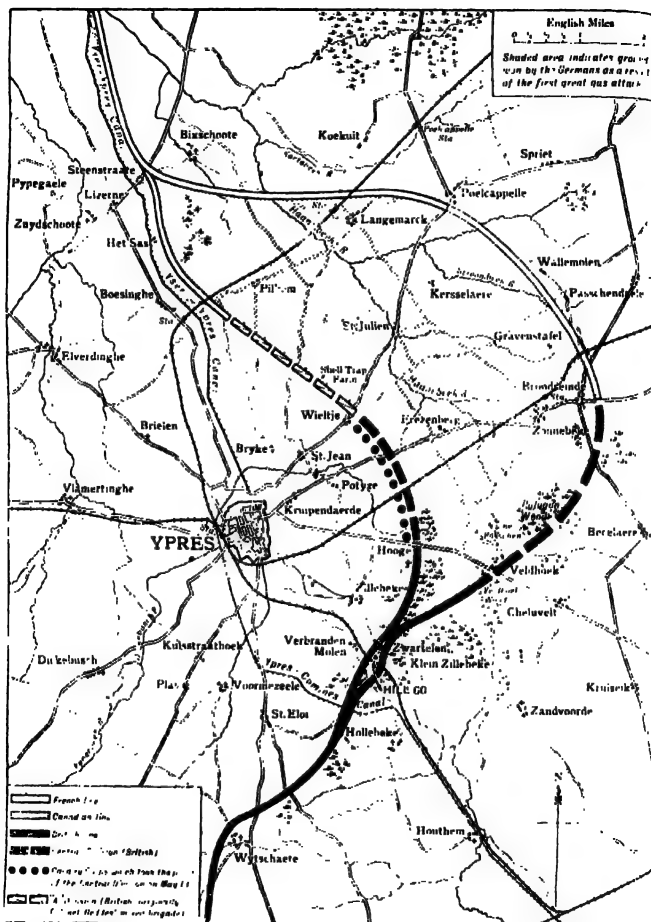
When the Second Battle of Ypres had ended, General French paid a well-deserved tribute to the splendid soldiers under his command. "In spite of the constant strain put upon them", he wrote in his dispatch, "by the arduous nature



044

## WAR WRECKED YPRES

View down one of the streets, showing skeleton of the tower of the famous Cloth Hall



10

## THE YPRES SALIENT

German attack on the Salient, Battle of Ypres, April 22-May 4, 1915

of the fighting which they are called upon to carry out daily, and almost hourly, the spirit which animates all ranks of the army in France remains high and confident”.

The Germans, having suffered great losses, gave up hope of forcing a decision on the Western front during 1915, and settled down to trench warfare, while they pursued a vigorous campaign on their Eastern front. In doing so they gave Britain time to train fresh armies and increase the supply of munitions, especially of high-explosive shells, in preparation for a great offensive in 1916.

During the summer the enemy introduced a new device in the form of liquid fire. On the Menin road at Hooze jets of burning liquid were poured into the British trenches and caused some confusion and a slight retreat, but it was a costly success for the enemy. Less than a fortnight later the lost ground was retaken and a stretch of German trench captured. On 25th September, a British attack was delivered at Loos. Ground was gained, and, as General French reported, “the large captures of men and material” testified to the completeness of the victory.

A good deal of trench fighting took place during the rest of the year and several brilliant little operations were carried out.

After about seventeen months of arduous fighting, General French retired in December



from the command of the British Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders, and was raised by the King to the rank of Viscount. He was succeeded by Sir Douglas Haig. The appointment was a popular one. "If", wrote a French military critic at the time, "the Germans have the faintest doubts about Britain's increasing determination to continue the war on our shore to its logical conclusion, the selection of Sir Douglas Haig will remove it."

## CHAPTER IX

### Great Deeds at the Dardanelles

During 1915 the campaign against Turkey was concentrated at the Dardanelles, the narrow, twisting straits, 35 miles long, between the Gallipoli Peninsula and Asia Minor, that lead to the Sea of Marmora and the Turkish capital, Constantinople.

The Dardanelles were protected by strong forts and earthworks, and strewn with mines. It was believed that if the Turkish defences were overpowered by attacks made by naval guns, the war-ships would force their way through "The Narrows", which are only about 1400 yards wide, and be able to enter the Sea of Marmora and threaten Constantinople. If British guns were trained on the Turkish capital, Turkey would be compelled to submit.

When the British and French war-ships opened fire on the forts, the mine-sweepers crept into the straits and began to sweep up the mines. But the Turks released floating mines that drifted down the current and rendered the attacks on their forts and earthworks highly

dangerous. The war-ships might silence the Turkish guns, but were liable to come into collision with the drifting mines.

Success attended the early operations in February. The war-ships opened an overwhelming bombardment on the forts situated below the two capes at the entrance to the straits. These were silenced, and unhindered by their fire, the mine-sweeping operations were commenced.

A way was thus cleared for the war-ships to enter the Dardanelles and reduce the inner forts. All went well until the middle of March, when the British battleships, *Irresistible* and *Ocean*, and the French battleship, *Bouvet*, struck floating mines and sank in deep water.

It soon became evident that the straits could not be cleared by war-ships alone. The permanent forts might be silenced and the mines either lifted or destroyed by small vessels, but the concealed batteries on the peninsula were difficult to deal with. These were well hidden among the hills and in clumps of trees, and the guns could be moved from place to place as required. Not until a strong force was landed to overrun Gallipoli could the straits be cleared for the war-ships. Preparations were therefore made to land an army on the peninsula.

There is no story in the annals of British heroism more thrilling and inspiring than that of the landings on Gallipoli. The Turks anti-

disputed them, and, assisted by skilled German officers, did their utmost to thwart the British plan. The shoreland is admirably suited for purposes of defence, being fringed by low cliffs which command the beaches, and on these the Turkish soldiers were able to take excellent cover so as to concentrate light artillery, machine-gun, and rifle fire on boats and disembarking forces. They dug trenches and also set up barbed-wire entanglements, not only on slopes and beaches but even in the water.

Various landings were made. Of these the most hotly contested was on the beach lettered V on the war charts, between Seddul Bhar and Cape Helles. Here a sandy shore leads up to a small valley which straggles inland among the hills. The fort at Seddul Bahr had been wrecked by fire from war-ships, but afforded cover for small guns and sharpshooters, while the area in its vicinity was well entrenched and protected by masses of barbed wire.

It was arranged that the attack on this strong and dangerous position should be made by a force of 2000 men who were conveyed in the liner *River Clyde*. This vessel had been specially prepared for the landing, big doors having been cut in her sides which could be swung open after the vessel was run ashore, to allow the men to make a sudden dash on the Turkish positions.

The attack began at early morning on Sun-

day, 25th April, before the fog had lifted from the peninsula. In front of the *River Clyde* went several steam pinnaces towing boats full of soldiers. These small vessels were subjected to so fierce a fire that the *River Clyde* reached the shore as soon as they. Even before a single man leapt on to dry land there were many casualties. Those who survived the hail of bullets and passed over and through the wire entanglements in shallow water, took cover on the beach.

As it happened, the *River Clyde* went ashore some distance to the east of the intended landing-place. A ridge of rock prevented her getting close enough to the beach. Between her and the shore a steam hopper was run in, which had to be made fast. This necessitated the carrying of a rope ashore. A midshipman leapt into the sea and managed to land with a rope which he and other volunteers made secure.

Meanwhile the Turks concentrated their fire on the grounded vessels. A gangway was run out on to the deck of the hopper and the men who scrambled down it had to pass from the hopper into the sea and then find cover on the beach.

Bullets fell like hailstones as the first couple of hundred soldiers made a rush towards the shore. Very few of them reached dry land, and those who did were unable to make headway.

It looked as if the attempted landing would prove a disastrous failure. Meanwhile the British battleships opened fire on the Turkish positions while the masses of men in the *River Clyde* kept under cover and awaited developments. The peril of their position was increased when shells began to fall around the vessel from Turkish guns on the Asiatic shore. It was the intention of the enemy to wreck the stranded liner.

All day long the war-ships were engaged against the Turks. Evening came on, and in the dusk the landing was resumed. From the *River Clyde* the British soldiers poured forth rapidly. The Turks were unprepared for this development, and the troops got ashore with hardly any casualties, and advanced into the valley. In the darkness the beach was pounded by Turkish shells and bullets, but the invaders were by this time able to take cover, and did not suffer great loss. Next morning they pressed inland and secured their positions.

The landing was assisted in its later stages by troops which had got ashore on W beach, between Cape Helles and Cape Teke. Here, as at V beach, a sloping shore leads to a valley from between cliffs. On the cliffs the Turks had been posted in strength to sweep the sands with fierce fusillades. The attack was made just before sunrise on Sunday morning, under cover of fire from war-ships. Boats

packed with Lancashires were towed towards the beach, and a portion of the men, on landing, began to scramble up the cliffs towards the Turkish positions. Some boats which reached the open part of the bay met with difficulties. On attempting to land, the men were tripped up or held back by entanglements in the shallow water, while Maxim guns rattled out death-dealing volleys from Turkish trenches and concealed positions in the cliffs. Armed blue-jackets, marines, and engineers, who had landed under Cape Teke had, however, forced their way to the summit, from which they drove back the Turks. An advance was then made by the main force, and reinforcements which landed in the forenoon pressed inland and worked their way towards V beach to help the troops confined in the *River Clyde* to effect a landing.

Fighting continued after darkness fell. Ammunition was running short, and thrilling stories are told of the gallant way in which fresh supplies were brought up from the shore by individuals. One heroic midshipman, for instance, loaded himself with as many bandoliers as he could carry, and crept towards the firing-line. Thrice he was struck down by bullets, but he escaped being wounded owing to the protection afforded by the bandoliers. The Turks were beaten back, and next morning reinforcements and ammunition were landed on W beach, and a junction was effected with

troops that had landed on X beach on the western shore of the peninsula.

This X beach landing had been a very effective one. It took place from the battleship *Implacable*, which, before sunrise, crept close to the shore, and from a distance of between 400 and 500 yards opened fire on cliffs and beach. A tornado of shells swept the Turkish lines, and prevented the enemy attacking the boats which were run ashore with troops that speedily advanced up the slopes and dug themselves in. Shell-fire from Krithia hampered them until the *Implacable* silenced the Turkish guns there. The men maintained their position until they could join up with the force on the right, that fought so well all night above the beach. Fighting went on throughout the darkness.

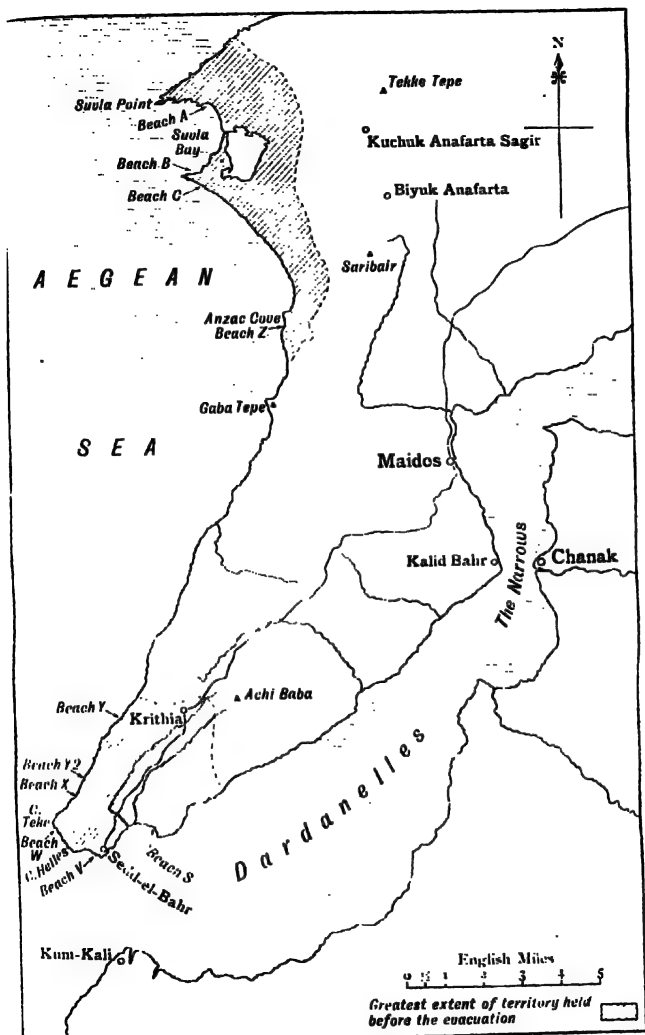
On the left were the troops that had landed on Y beach. The force had good luck at first. It was composed of about 2000 men, who got ashore under cover of fire from three cruisers. The Turks were not in force on the shore, and the cliff was occupied. As it proved, however, the position could not be held, and, after a strong resistance, the force retreated under fire and returned to the ships.

The landings were not confined to the point of the peninsula. At a point north of Gaba Tepe, since known as Anzac, the Australian and New Zealand troops displayed their fine



qualities as fighting men, which they maintained all through the war. The attacking troops were moved from their base on Saturday night packed in war-ships. When near the coast the men were transferred into boats which were taken in tow by steam pinnaces. In the darkness before dawn the pinnaces, with their tows, crept towards the landing-place. No light was shown, and every voice was hushed. The shore was wrapped in silence. There was no indication that the enemy was there until nearly five o'clock, when a light was seen flashing an alarm signal. Sentinels had evidently caught sight of the invaders as the first ray of dawn shone faintly in the eastern sky. A few minutes later Turkish bullets came whizzing through the air and spattered like great rain-drops on the dim waters. By this time the boats were in the shallows, and the men were leaping out of them and rushing up the beach. They made straight for the line of fire and took a Turkish position at the point of the bayonet.

As the light cleared, the attacking party found that they had landed northward of the open beach and right below a cliff, from a ledge of which the Turks were pouring down a withering fire. But the Australians and New Zealanders were in no way daunted. They cast off their packs and began to scramble up the face of the cliff to get at the enemy. In less than





twenty minutes they cleared the Turks from their second position. Then they pressed on. It was difficult ground for organized fighting. Turkish snipers lay everywhere, concealed by earthen mounds, boulders, and the dense scrub.

The morning brightened and the war-ships opened fire, but it was difficult to locate the enemy positions. Meanwhile reinforcements were being rushed to the shore from the fleet of transports which followed the war-ships. The men leapt into the shallow water and rushed through a screen of enemy bullets to take cover beneath the cliffs, up which they scrambled eagerly and bravely.

From guns posted at various points of vantage the enemy swept the beach with shrapnel. Against these the guns of the war-ships were directed. Some Turkish batteries on Gaba Tepe were particularly active, until a cruiser crept near the shore and silenced them. During the bombardment Turkish snipers tried to pick off officers and men on the deck of the cruiser.

The Australians and New Zealanders gradually secured their position on the heights and fought vigorously all day. After darkness fell the Turks, who had been reinforced, delivered fierce night attacks, but were driven back at the point of the bayonet.

Next morning the enemy came forward in strong force. Their orders were to drive the Australians and New Zealanders into the sea.

Supported by artillery, which rained shrapnel incessantly, they crept forward, but seven British war-ships opened fire on them, the great super-Dreadnought battleship *Queen Elizabeth* sending forth from her 15-inch guns shrapnel shell, each of which, on bursting, let loose about 20,000 bullets. A Turkish war-ship moved down the "Narrows" of the Dardanelles and began to fire shells over the peninsula, but H.M.S. *Triumph* replied with such effect that she had to withdraw.

The Turks pressed their attack for about a couple of hours. They were unable, however, to continue it across the zone which the guns of the war-ships covered with a screen of fire, and their losses were heavy. In the end the Australians and New Zealanders leapt to their feet and rushed at the enemy with their bayonets. It was an irresistible attack and the Turks retreated under heavy fire from the sea.

The dauntless sons of Empire, who had fought so well, next dug trenches and consolidated their position. All night long desultory fighting continued. On the following day, the 27th, the Turks, having brought up more artillery, did their utmost to prevent further landings by shelling the beach and endeavouring to hit transports; but although many casualties were sustained, the landing of men and stores continued. The Anzac position was thus

secured and strengthened, the Turks being unable to rush it even with superior numbers.

Other landings were effected in addition to those already detailed. One was on S beach, farther up the Dardanelles entrance than Seddul Bahr, where the enemy had a strong position, and another below Seddul Bahr which was not pressed and was eventually abandoned.

On the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles, the French effected a successful landing and rushed Kum Kale, where they took a few hundred prisoners, but this was only a feint, and the men were afterwards re-embarked to take over one of the positions captured on the peninsula by the British allies.

Having linked up and reinforced the various landing parties round the toe of the peninsula, Sir Ian Hamilton gave orders to press inland. The strong opposition shown by the Turks was broken down in the early stages, and the left wing advanced towards Krithia until beyond the Y beach landing-place. The right wing was held up by the defences on the ridge of Achi Baba mountain, which is 728 feet high, so that the Allied lines on 30th May were shaped somewhat like the figure 7. Gallant attacks were made on Achi Baba, but the Turks had taken full advantage of the natural defences, which were strengthened by trenches and barbed-wire entanglements and by concealed

artillery. Achi Baba proved to be impregnable, and the fighting on its lower slopes went on for months.

On 21st May the Turks were able to mass a strong force against the gallant holders of the Anzac position, but their attacks were made in vain, and here, as round Achi Baba, a long period of trench warfare was begun.

Early in August a new development took place. Sir Ian Hamilton, having received considerable reinforcements, planned a fresh landing in Suvla Bay so as to extend the Anzac area of operations and outflank the Turks. It was hoped that a surprise landing would be followed by an advance to the ridge of hills forming the "backbone" of the peninsula, and commanding the upper part of the "Narrows". If a success could be achieved, the Turks defending Achi Baba would be cut off and compelled in time to surrender, while all the forts commanding the "Narrows" would be attacked and taken from the land side. It was a bold and soldierly scheme, and, if it had been carried out, the Dardanelles would have been opened for the passage of British ships into the Sea of Marmora. Turkey would then have found Constantinople threatened by British guns and been forced to capitulate.

The operation was well planned and a successful landing was made. Three British brigades got ashore, but parts of the force,

consisting mainly of "raw troops", became disorganized owing to the lack of sufficient water. The result was that the attack was "held up", and the Turks were given time to rush forward ample reinforcements. One British brigade pressed on, and the "Anzacs" co-operated by attacking Sari Bar, which they captured but were unable to hold, as the supporting positions were not taken.

Sir Ian Hamilton appealed to the Home Government for reinforcements, and said that if they could be sent to him at once he "would still clear a passage for our fleet to Constantinople".

It was impossible, however, to comply with his request on account of the demands made for men in France and Flanders. On 21st August another attempt to break through the Turkish defences met with failure, despite the gallant efforts made and although the fringe of land occupied was extended.

The country was unhealthy for British troops and there was much sickness. No other soldiers could have held on as they did in the face of an enemy superior in number and occupying the best position.

Many gallant feats were carried out on land and sea. One of the most remarkable was achieved by the gallant naval officer, Lieutenant D'Oyly-Hughes. A submarine had gone up the Dardanelles and entered the Sea of Mar-



mora. The lieutenant left it in the darkness and swam towards the shore, pushing in front of him a small raft on which was a bomb charge. It was his intention to blow up a brickwork support of the railway line over which supplies were carried to the Turkish troops on Gallipoli peninsula. On the raft, beside the bomb, were his clothing, a revolver, a bayonet, an electric torch, and a whistle. No hero in fiction ever set forth on a greater adventure against odds. The railway was guarded by Turkish sentinels, and between it and the shore men might be moving about. A single Turk was sufficient to frustrate the attempt.

The lieutenant swam to the shore in the darkness and found, when he landed, that he was right below a cliff. He had therefore to enter the sea again and swim to a less difficult place. It was no easy task to choose a good landing-place in the darkness. He managed, however, to reach a spot which gave him his chance. A steep slope rose in front of him, and up it he clambered, carrying the explosive charge. It took him half an hour to reach the summit, and beyond it he advanced very cautiously for about six hundred yards. Suddenly he heard voices. Three men were sitting beside the line and chatting loudly, little thinking that a daring British officer was creeping towards them. Not far off was an armed guard.

The lieutenant laid down the charge and crept away in the darkness to decide what part of the railway line he could manage to destroy. It was hopeless to attempt to blow up the viaduct, since close to it was burning the camp-fire of a party of the enemy, and, finding a place where the line crossed a small hollow on a brickwork support, he made up his mind to destroy it at that point. On his way back to get the charge he very nearly raised an alarm by stumbling in the darkness into a poultry house. The startled birds scattered, clucking loudly, but fortunately nobody took notice of this.

Soon afterwards the officer found his charge and placed it below the brickwork. Then he set fire to the fuse, the pistol of which gave so loud a crack that the three Turks who were chatting beside the line, about 150 yards distant, heard it and came running towards the spot. They caught sight of the lieutenant, who turned and fired at them with his revolver. The Turks also opened fire. Lieutenant D'Oyly-Hughes, fearing that his retreat to the shore and his raft would be cut off, ran along the railway line for nearly a mile and then turned towards the beach. As he stood at the water's edge he heard the loud report of the exploding charge. His attempt had been successful. Plunging into the sea, he swam straight out for about 500 yards and blew his whistle to

call the submarine. But the submarine was lying on the other side of a headland and the sound of his whistle was not heard.

Wearied by the exertions of the night the lieutenant had to swim back to the shore and rest. Dawn was by this time beginning to steal over the eastern sky, and he knew that the Turks were searching for him along the cliffs, for he heard their voices. Once more taking to the water, he set out to swim round the headland, blowing his whistle as before. This time it was heard on board the submarine, but also by the Turks. The submarine crept towards him, but, moving through the uncertain light and mist, it looked like three small rowing-boats, and the lieutenant, thinking the enemy were searching for him, swam towards the rocks to find a hiding-place. No sooner did he leave the water and look round than he found he had made a mistake. There was the submarine waiting for him. He gave a loud shout and, entering the sea again, swam towards it. He was picked up in a very exhausted condition, about 40 yards from the rocks. He had swum about a mile in his clothes a very remarkable feat.

Turkish soldiers were shooting from the cliffs as the wearied officer was being taken on board, but no one was hit. The submarine steamed away and vanished in the morning mist.

British submarines had before this time made

successful attacks in the Sea of Marmora, sinking or damaging 2 Turkish battleships, 5 gunboats, 1 torpedo boat, 8 transports, and 197 supply ships.

As winter drew near it was decided that the British forces should evacuate Gallipoli. The rough weather would have damaged the piers, and the torrents would have filled the trenches, making it easy for the Turks to press home their attacks. It was not worth while holding on, for the Turks required only a small force to defend their positions during winter, and would be enabled to mass their men to attack Egypt and fight for lost ground in Mesopotamia.

The evacuation was well planned and carried out with as much skill as had been the landings. Suvla Bay and Anzac were evacuated in a single night, and the Turks woke up next morning to find that the whole British force had vanished. Shortly afterwards the positions at the point of the peninsula were similarly evacuated, and the Turks did not become aware of the fact until they heard the explosions of ammunition dumps, and saw the vast quantities of stores that had to be left behind enwrapped in flames. Thus ended the Gallipoli campaign.

## CHAPTER X

### The Smiting of Russia and Serbia

During 1915 the Germans, who had settled down to trench warfare on the Western front, were endeavouring to deal Russia a "knock-out" blow. A great "drive" on the Eastern front began in the spring, and gradually compelled the Russians to retreat along a wide front. By the month of August, Warsaw was taken. Then Russia was offered, by Germany, a separate peace, which was promptly refused, and in September the Tsar assumed command of the army in the field. In October the Germans developed a "push" in the Baltic provinces.

"The German objective", said Lord Kitchener in the House of Lords during these critical days, "is evidently to destroy the Russian army as a force in being, and thus to set free large numbers of their troops for action elsewhere. . . . While the Germans have prevailed by sheer weight of guns, and at immense cost to themselves, in forcing back the Russian front, nothing but barren territory and evacu-

ated fortresses have been gained. Thus their strategy has clearly failed, and victories they claim may only prove, as military history has so often demonstrated, to be defeats in disguise." This opinion has been confirmed by subsequent happenings. Had the Germans contented themselves by "holding up" the Russians on the east and throwing their weight against the Western front, the war might have had a different ending.

Serbia suffered martyrdom during the latter part of 1915. The Austrians resumed their offensive against this small country with the aid of German troops and under German leadership. On 7th October, Belgrade was captured, and five days later Bulgaria declared war on Serbia. On 15th October, Britain declared war on Bulgaria. Attacked on the north and east, Serbia was unable to resist the terrible pressure imposed upon her. The Bulgarians were in Nish early in November, and, after the Austro-German forces drove southward, advanced towards Monastir. The Serbian army was in full retreat towards Albania by the middle of November. With it went thousands of refugees, large numbers of whom perished among the snow-clad mountains. "We started in a snow-storm", tells a British nurse who took part in the retreat, "and spent the first night round a camp-fire with the snow falling. We walked about 15 or 16 miles a day. The highest mountain we

climbed was about 7500 feet above sea-level. Two of our party walked for a whole day through the mountain snows in their stocking feet. . . . We had to cross broken bridges and wade through rivers that were icy cold. . . . Sometimes the bread froze in our pockets. We slept wherever we could find shelter. Sometimes we were walking nearly knee-deep in the snow."

Another nurse has told: "The first part of the journey was largely over rich Serbian plains. But once we were across the border it was walking at great height on the mountains of Montenegro. Sometimes the path was only a few inches wide. These narrow paths would turn at an angle so suddenly that you could not see any path ahead; you walked on the edge of a precipice, and, far below, you could hear the boiling of the mountain torrent. That is the sort of country we traversed in a blinding snow-storm, and when there is a frost the paths are covered with ice. It is not pleasant to walk on ice at the top of a stony mountain."

Another tells: "One day we walked 21 miles over the mountains, while it was snowing hard for most of the time. On another day we walked 23 miles. During this trek the feet of some of our party became so painful through the blisters that had been raised that they were obliged to take off their boots."

As has been said, many perished among the

mountains. The refugees who reached the coast were taken to Italy and France. It is calculated that Serbia lost about one-fifth of its population. The soldiers, who had displayed so much courage and endurance, were well taken care of after being conveyed from the coast. They were afterwards reorganized and re-equipped to be sent to Salonika.

King Peter of Serbia, who escaped to Italy, was in bad health but full of courage. "My soldiers", he said, "are falling from hunger and fatigue. They must be revictualled, then after a few weeks we shall see. In any case, I must live to see the victory of my people and the triumph of our just cause."

On the Salonika front British and French troops were massing to hold back the invaders. The Bulgarians captured Monastir, the capital of Macedonia, on 2nd December, and the Allies retreated from Macedonia a few days later.

In Mesopotamia the British force, which had been landed from the Persian Gulf, and taken possession of a great part of ancient Babylonia, had won successes over the Turks. In November it pressed too far northward. On 22nd November it defeated the Turks at Ctesiphon, about 18 miles distant from Bagdad, but afterwards found it necessary, on account of the shortage of supplies, to retreat to Kut-el-Amara. The Turks had been heavily reinforced, and having invested Kut pressed south-



ward and held back the relieving force. Kut was doomed to fall after a prolonged siege.

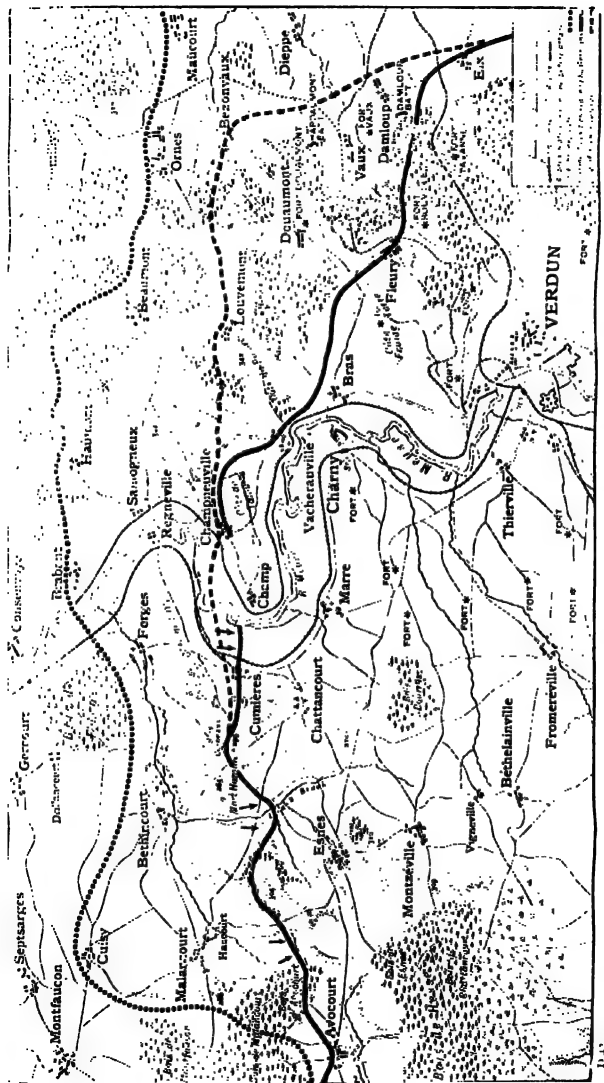
Of greater importance than the offensive against Russia and Serbia was the entry of Italy into the war. She declared war on Austria on 24th May, waging a vigorous campaign which in September resulted in the Austrian evacuation of the Trentino.

Meanwhile recruiting was brisk in Britain. The Derby Scheme was introduced in October, and was stimulated by Zeppelin raids on the eastern counties of England and on London, as well as by outrages committed by German submarines, which were likewise arousing considerable feeling in the United States. The *Lusitania* was sunk on 7th May, and on that day Germany, in effect, declared war against all neutral Powers. At the same time she sounded her own doom. On board that great Atlantic liner were 1257 passengers, including a number of United States citizens, and a crew of about 700. Only 472 passengers escaped death. "Of 90 children 59 were lost, and of 39 infants only 4 were saved."

The liner was attacked off the south coast of Ireland while steaming towards Liverpool. No warning was given. At three o'clock in the afternoon a torpedo, discharged by a submerged submarine, struck her on the starboard side. The vessel ran on for eighteen minutes and then went down.

A GAS VILLAGE





# VERDUN AND SURROUNDINGS

It was asserted by the German Government that the *Lusitania* was carrying ammunition, but this was untrue. Berlin had resolved to destroy British shipping, and, indeed, all vessels trading with Britain and her allies. It was not foreseen at Berlin that the submarine atrocities would ultimately increase the number of Germany's enemies and seal her fate.

## CHAPTER XI

### Germany's Great Verdun Venture

In 1916 Germany made a desperate effort to capture Verdun, break the French line, and sweep in great force towards Paris. But she was thwarted in the first place by the heroic and steadfast defence of the French army, and in the second by the vigorous British offensive in the Somme valley, which upset her plans and compelled her to withdraw many troops and great quantities of artillery and stores from the Verdun area.

The Verdun struggle was one of epic character. It was a great battle, with many phases, which waged with varying degrees of intensity for about eleven months.

Taking advantage of the wooded and hilly country near Verdun, the Germans concentrated their best troops and artillery of every kind, including 12-inch and 17-inch howitzers for destroying concrete fortifications. They not only drew men from the northern part of the Western front, but from Serbia and Russia, until they had the strongest army they had ever been able to put into action.

The attack began in February on a front of about 25 miles, when a tremendous bombardment was opened on the French positions. German gun fire was concentrated on special points on the line until it was considered that the defensive organizations were destroyed; other points being similarly dealt with in turn. Then forces of infantry were sent out on fronts of only a few miles in extent, the object being to force open narrow lanes through the French lines by sheer weight of numbers. When isolated bodies in earthworks showed strong resistance, the German infantry pressed past them and allowed them to be dealt with by their artillery. But the French defence proved too elastic for the Germans. According to plan, the defenders retired from their outer lines which had been shattered by shell-fire, and when the Germans discovered this and followed, they found the French troops in strong positions that could not easily be broken through.

A young French lieutenant has given a vivid account of his experiences in the first stage of the great battle. He and his fellows had been sent to reinforce an infantry regiment on a hill which was becoming isolated as the Germans advanced. "Our position", he tells, "dominated the whole battle scene. A thick black pall of smoke covered the whole plain beneath us, and it was constantly being stabbed by the flashes from big guns that roared like

a hundred thunder-storms. We overlooked the village of Beaumont, which was the key of the battle at this stage. All day long the fighting went on furiously, and it did not cease when night fell, and the gun flashes grew more and more vivid.

“When dawn broke dimly some one called, ‘They are coming’. We saw, to our astonishment, four squadrons of German cavalry galloping down the slope towards Beaumont. Masses of infantry followed them. . . . We opened fire. Each man took careful aim. There was no hurry, no excitement. Then broke out a withering fire. . . . I watched the enemy through my field-glasses as they pressed forward. They were falling like flies, but fresh troops were always coming up to replace them. Seven times the Germans charged against us in a vain endeavour to reach the summit, and seven times they were repulsed. Hour by hour went past, and still the fighting went on. Then, as the sun was beginning to set, the German artillery, which had been brought up, commenced to bombard us on three sides. Heavy shells burst in our midst, and before long our position became untenable. Our carefully prepared shelters were smashed, and many of our men were killed.

“The order came for us to retire to the French lines. To do this we had to cross an open space that was lashed by a storm of shells,

falling thick as hailstones. When there were twenty yards between me and safety, I felt myself lifted up and then flung violently to the ground. A shell had burst, and ten of us were lying helpless on the earth. We were rescued under cover of darkness."

The Germans paid a high price for the ground they gained, their losses being extremely heavy.

A terrible struggle took place round the Douaumont position. Here the fort was wrecked and the redoubt captured with the village early in the battle. The village was speedily retaken, and a counter-attack drove the enemy out of the redoubt. The Germans recaptured it, but it was taken from them again. Thus did the fighting wage furiously on the Douaumont plateau. Thousands of dead and wounded lay scattered between the opposing guns. Trenches were wiped out, and men had to take cover in shell-holes and behind ruined defences. The Germans advanced by what the French called "buffalo tactics", and the French themselves fought valiantly to hold them back and by pouring shell-fire behind their positions to throw them into confusion. The Germans hoped, as certain of their writers put it, to "bleed France to death" at Verdun. The loss of men on the French side was certainly very heavy, but the German loss was heavier. Indeed, it is now the general opinion that the Verdun adventure was one of the chief causes of Germany's undoing.



Britain was able to lend a hand to her sorely-pressed ally by taking over a large part of the defence of the Western front south of Loos and beyond Arras. Considerable numbers of French troops were thus relieved for service in the Verdun area.

This development caused some alarm at Berlin. It was recognized that the British army was becoming a growing menace, and that the Verdun struggle was going to be prolonged if something drastic were not accomplished to disturb British plans. German airmen had begun to detect signs of the concentration of men and material in the Somme valley, where a great offensive was in preparation. It was consequently decided to open an attack in the Ypres section. In June, 1916, this attack was developed in some force, and, at first, met with a measure of success.

This new Ypres offensive was thought at the time to be another German attempt to break through the British lines and capture the Channel ports. But, as it proved, it was really a local offensive intended to delay the "push" in the Somme valley. Once again the Canadians distinguished themselves, fighting, first on the defensive and then in delivering a counter-offensive, which was a brilliant success. Preparations in the Somme area were not therefore delayed.

Early in June a great loss was sustained in

the death of Lord Kitchener. This distinguished soldier, who had done so much during the most critical period of the war to raise, train, and organize new British armies, was proceeding on a special mission to Russia. H.M.S. *Hampshire*, on which he was travelling, foundered off the Orkney Islands, having, it is believed, struck a mine.

A heavy gale was blowing on that Monday evening of 5th June, 1916, and the doomed vessel sank quickly. Lord Kitchener appeared on the quarter deck soon after the explosion occurred. He refused to enter a boat which was being lowered. As a matter of fact, each boat was smashed by the rough seas that pounded the vessel. Three rafts were, however, successfully launched. Lord Kitchener went down with the ship. Among the many tributes paid to his memory none was more touching than a poem which appeared in a French war journal, of which the following verse is a translation:

Oh! Britain's hero needs the worthiest of graves,  
 No earth hole -a sea-tomb, the noblest of all!  
 God his funeral planned. A requiem sang the waves,  
 Cliffs were the organ pipes, the black sky was his  
     pall;  
 For flowers he had foam-wreaths flashing white and  
     fair,  
 And for funeral torches lightning in the air.

## CHAPTER XII

### Battle of Jutland

A few days previously, on 31st May, Germany had challenged British sea supremacy at the famous naval battle of Jutland. The Berlin war-lords had planned to strike shattering blows at sea as on land, believing that if they prevailed at Verdun and on the North Sea, the war would be brought to a speedy and successful conclusion. The growing military strength of the British Empire was upsetting all their calculations. Things were not working out according to their paper plans.

On that memorable afternoon in May the German fleet made a sudden and dramatic appearance in the North Sea. It looked to German eyes as if it were capable of achieving a success, perhaps as sweeping a one as had been won in the battle of Coronel, when Cradock was opposed by overwhelming odds. A blow was to be struck which would seriously threaten the British command of the seas.

A British division, under the command of Admiral Beatty, was at hand. This was the

battle-cruiser fleet, which was inferior in strength and numbers to the massed naval might of Germany. If it could be destroyed before the arrival of Admiral Jellicoe with his great squadron of battleships, the margin of superiority between the rival fleets would be reduced and the British blockade rendered less effective. A naval victory for Germany would thus have far-reaching effects. It might lay open part of the British coast to invasion, commerce destroyers could be released and sent into the Atlantic, and a blow might be struck at British sea-communications in the English Channel which would seriously hamper the Somme offensive then in course of preparation.

When Admiral von Scheer, who commanded the German fleet, came out boldly to intercept the British cruiser squadron, he was evidently confident that he would achieve, at any rate, a spectacular success.

Although Beatty found himself threatened by superior numbers, he did not hesitate to accept battle. As Jellicoe has recorded in his dispatch, this gallant admiral "once again showed his fine qualities of gallant leadership, firm determination, and correct strategic insight. He appreciated the situation at once on sighting first the enemy's lighter forces, then his battle-cruisers, and finally his battle fleet."

The action began between two and three

o'clock on a dull afternoon with low-hanging clouds. Five German light cruisers hove in sight and were at once engaged. They were followed by five battle-cruisers, and a British water-plane pilot reported that these were being supported by Germany's most powerful battleships. It was at once recognized that Admiral von Scheer's intention was to seek a decision before the British battleship squadron could come up.

Beatty's plan was to keep the Germans engaged until Jellicoe arrived. He had, therefore, not only to draw them on, but to keep them heavily involved. During the three hours of this desperate struggle heavy losses were sustained on both sides.

When at length Jellicoe was drawing near, Beatty made a bold endeavour, by curving round the German fleet, to cut it off from escape into the Baltic or towards Heligoland Bight. This movement was developing between six and seven o'clock, and the great British super-Dreadnought battleships were then taking heavy toll of the enemy. The light was failing, however. Had the battle begun early in the forenoon, the issue would have been a different one. It is unlikely that many of the enemy vessels would have escaped destruction or capture.

Beatty's bold move in getting between the Germans and the shore enabled the British

gunners to obtain better conditions of visibility than the enemy, because, in the dusk, the German vessels stood out against the western sky. The hostile fleet was severely punished. "Our fire began to tell," runs the official report, "and the accuracy and rapidity of that of the enemy depreciated considerably." Soon the head of the German line was thrown into confusion. Darkness was coming on and great clouds of smoke enveloped the sea. The positions of the opposing ships were then known only by signal. Meanwhile, Jellicoe's great battle fleet swept across the bows of the enemy and its fire burst forth with considerable fury. This was the final blow in the battle which was becoming a decisive victory for the British fleet. The time was about seven o'clock. Admiral von Scheer realized his peril and did his utmost to avoid further fighting, turning away his vessels to escape the tornadoes of British shells and sending out great smoke screens to conceal them. Still the attackers hung on and the enemy vessels dropped out of the line or went down. "The enemy's return fire at this period," Jellicoe reported, "was not effective and the damage caused to our ships was insignificant."

At about eight o'clock the British light cruisers were sweeping westward to locate the head of the enemy's line. They were followed by the heavier vessels. At about eight-thirty

two German battleships and cruisers were attacked at a range of 10,000 yards. "The leading ship," Jellicoe relates, "was hit repeatedly by the *Lion* and turned away eight points, emitting very high flames and with a heavy list to port. *Princess Royal* set fire to a three-funnelled battleship." Another German vessel was seen on fire and heeling over.

A heavy mist had enveloped the main force of the enemy, and although British cruisers swept towards the north-west until 9.24 p.m., they could not sight Admiral von Scheer's fleet.

"In view of the gathering darkness," Jellicoe wrote in his dispatch, "and the fact that our strategical position was such as to make it certain we should locate the enemy at daylight under most favourable circumstances, I did not consider it desirable or proper to chase the enemy battle fleet during the dark hours."

Admiral Jellicoe thus displayed great caution; some think he was too cautious. The enemy did not want to renew the struggle. Admiral von Scheer effected an escape with the remnants of his fleet, many of the vessels which reached Wilhelmshaven having been seriously crippled. Yet Germany claimed a naval victory, boasting that the British command of the sea was no longer a reality.

On the morning after the battle, Jellicoe and

Beatty searched for German vessels. "The British fleet", Jellicoe reported, "remained in the proximity of the battle-field and near the line of approach to German ports until 11 a.m. on 1st June, in spite of the disadvantage of long distances from fleet bases and the danger incurred in waters adjacent to enemy coasts from submarines and torpedo craft. The enemy, however, made no sign, and I was reluctantly compelled to the conclusion that the High Sea Fleet had returned into port." A further search was made in vain. "A large amount of wreckage was seen, but no enemy ships." At 1.15 p.m. the vessels of the British fleet therefore began to return to their bases.

The losses sustained by the Germans were heavy. No fewer than 21 of their vessels were put out of action, 16 having been seen to sink, including 2 Dreadnought battleships, 1 battleship of the Deutschland type, 1 battle-cruiser, 3 light cruisers, 6 torpedo-boat destroyers and 1 submarine. 1 Dreadnought battleship, 1 battle-cruiser and 3 torpedo-boat destroyers were "seen to be so severely damaged as to render it extremely doubtful if they could reach port".

The British losses included 3 battle-cruisers, 3 armoured-cruisers, and 8 destroyers.

In spite of German boasting, there can be no doubt as to which side won. Never again during the war did the German fleet attempt



to measure its strength against the British fleet. When next it came out in force, it was to surrender ignominiously. The Battle of Jutland was Germany's first and last attempt on a big scale to win the mastery of the seas.

## CHAPTER XIII

### Germany Thwarted on the Somme

The situation in the Verdun area became more serious during the early days of June. On the 7th, after a full week of heavy fighting, the Germans captured Fort Vaux. As they had previously regained possession of Fort Douaumont, this success was an important one, and it was followed up until they reached within four miles of Verdun. But the French had prepared new and strong defences. Their line had been thrown back but remained unbroken, and time was on their side. Already, when success seemed to be within the grasp of the Germans, the tide of battle on the Western front was beginning to turn. The British and French offensive in the Somme valley, which was in course of preparation, was beginning to make itself felt just when Berlin heard with joy the tidings that Thiaumont work was captured. During the closing days of June, the Germans increased their pressure, but they were to be forced to withdraw large forces from before

Verdun to fight on the defensive in the Somme valley.

Meanwhile in the east the Russians were beginning a great offensive against Austria, thus preventing Germany's ally giving her assistance on the Western front, and, at the same time, assisting Italy, which was taking the offensive against the Austrians in the Trentino. A Russian offensive in the Caucasus was also being vigorously developed.

The Somme offensive changed the whole character of the war during 1916. It was directed against a great barrier of entrenched positions which were intended to be, and believed by the enemy to be, impregnable. By holding these with a minimum of forces the Germans were enabled to rush masses of troops to their "storm centres" either on the Eastern or Western frontier, and thus to take the offensive in considerable strength at whatever point the Berlin strategists chose to select. So long, therefore, as their lines remained intact, they were able to maintain the offensive with the object of defeating each of the Allies in turn.

The Somme offensive upset German plans. It proved that even their strongest positions were not secure against concentrated attacks. A greater demand for man-power was consequently forced upon them, with the result that they lost, to a great extent, the advantage of



WINNING THE STRONGHOLDS OF THE THERMAL RIDGE  
A group of men are seen in the foreground, standing on a rocky ledge, looking up at the steep, rocky cliff face.



having at their disposal a considerable mobile army.

Great as was the German concentration of guns and men in the Verdun area, the British concentration in the Somme valley was even greater. British artisans at home had turned out vast quantities of munitions, and fresh armies had been raised and specially trained to take part in the new system of warfare. Time had been gained to bring about this welcomed change by the gallant men who, although insufficiently equipped, had held back the German advance during 1914 and 1915.

On 24th June the British bombardment was begun. It raged in varying degrees of intensity along the entire line. At the time, the Germans were reoccupying the ruined fort of Douaumont, outside Verdun, and preparing for what they believed was to be their last great assault. But the British guns were thundering forth the doom of the great Verdun offensive. British gas was being used with effect, and raids were being made at various points to obtain information regarding the enemy's dispositions. British flying-men were also obtaining a mastery over the Germans, bringing down aeroplanes and destroying captive balloons. Meanwhile the British forces were concentrated to deliver their attacks as soon as the way was cleared for them by the artillery. The French were also making ready to take part in the offensive, and this was

one of the surprises in store for the Germans, who believed that the entire French reserves were being absorbed at Verdun.

The joint attack began at 7.30 a.m. on 1st July, after a tremendous artillery bombardment which paralysed the front line of German defences. It was resisted by the concentrated fire of the enemy. The Germans were strongly entrenched, and their machine-guns were not only numerous but were concealed. Villages had been fortified and large numbers of troops lay concealed in underground works where they were secure from bursting shells. From these they emerged to set up a desperate resistance to the British and French advance.

The battle ebbed and flowed along the great front. Yet on the first day considerable ground was gained at various points, great networks of trenches being taken. Even where small gains were made, as on the north, the Germans were kept fully occupied and prevented from sending assistance to other sorely-pressed points which crumbled before the gallant advance. The French were under the command of General Foch, and met with less serious resistance than the British, the Germans having miscalculated their power to take the offensive.

The magnificent spirit displayed by our soldiers was, after all, the chief cause of the success achieved. It cannot be better illus-

trated than in the following letter written by a young officer on the day before the beginning of the offensive :

"I am writing this letter to you" (his parents) "before going into action to-morrow morning about dawn. I am about to take part in the biggest battle that has yet been fought in France. . . . I never felt more confident or cheerful in my life, and would not miss the attack for anything on earth. The men are in splendid form, and every officer and man is more happy and cheerful than I have ever seen them. . . . It is impossible to fear death out here when one is no longer an individual, but a member of a regiment and of an army. To be killed means nothing to me, and it is only you who suffer for it; you pay the cost. . . . Well, good-bye, you darlings."

He was killed next day, but the spirit he displayed lived on.

The Germans were forced before long to abandon the Verdun campaign, and every man and gun they could spare had to be rushed into the Somme valley cockpit lest their line should be broken and the situation in France imperilled. Desperate fighting took place. Among the strong positions on which the enemy depended were the woods of Bailiff, Trônes, Bernafay and Mametz. These were packed with machine-guns and concealed artillery, and were strongly entrenched. When our troops advanced on either side of one of these woods their flanks were exposed to heavy fire. Bold



frontal attacks had consequently to be made. Welsh regiments distinguished themselves in taking Mametz Wood, through which they fought with great gallantry, sustaining heavy losses. All day long the struggle waged fiercely, nor did it cease when darkness fell. Pressing on, step by step, the Welshmen drove the Germans out of the wood and beyond it, thus securing the positions occupied by English regiments which had captured the village stronghold of Contalmaison.

Progress during the first month of the offensive was necessarily slow, but it was nevertheless considerable. Beyond Mametz Wood and Contalmaison the British troops pressed constantly on either side of the great main trunk highway leading from Albert to Bapaume. The village of Pozières on this road was the scene of a desperate struggle, in which the Australians distinguished themselves greatly by their dash and tenacity. They captured part of the shattered village and held on to it notwithstanding the incessant German shelling. An official correspondent has told that the enemy sent in "eight heavy shells at a time, minute after minute, followed up by burst upon burst of shrapnel. Now he would place a curtain straight across this valley or that, till the sky and landscape were blotted out, except for fleeting glimpses seen as through a lift of fog. Gas shell, musty with chloroform, sweet-

scented tear shell that made your eyes run with water, high-bursting shrapnel with black smoke and a vicious high-explosive rattle behind its heavy pellets, ugly green bursts the colour of a fat silkworm, huge black clouds from the high-explosives of his five-point-nines." The Australians, like the other heroes of the great Empire army, were not, however, dismayed. "Day and night", continues this writer, "the men worked through it, fighting this horrid machinery far over the horizon as if they were fighting Germans hand-to-hand—building up whatever it battered down; buried, some of them, not once, but again and again and again."

In spite of the strong and determined German defence, Pozières was taken, and the Territorials on the left of the Australians swept forward and secured the position. Desperate counter-attacks were made by the enemy time and again, and Delville Wood, in which the fighting swayed backward and forwards time after time, well earned its nickname of "Devil's Wood". On the British right the village of Guillemont was the scene of a desperate struggle, and here the Irish, who finally captured it, did magnificent work.

On the left the ridge of Thiepval was the scene of as fierce a fight as occurred on any part of the Verdun front. At this point the troops of the Prussian Guard, Germany's premier

regiment, made tremendous efforts to hold up the attacks delivered by English and Scottish troops, but after weeks of hard fighting Thiepval was captured, and also much ground around and beyond it.

One of the important results of the great Somme struggle was that the troops of the British Empire established their superiority as fighting men over the Germans. In the first three months' fighting 26,735 German prisoners were taken, and great networks of trenches and strong earthworks, on which the enemy had placed his trust, were wrested from him.

One of the greatest surprises for the Germans was the introduction of British "tanks", which first appeared in the Somme valley about the middle of September. These had been specially invented for trench warfare. Imagine the astonishment of the enemy when these heavily-armoured "land ships" went rumbling through masses of barbed wire, clearing lanes for the infantry, crushing machine-gun posts and then swinging over trenches which they promptly cleared by the fire of their guns. In an official dispatch it was reported that the tanks caused "indescribable demoralization in the enemy's ranks". The village of Flers, which was strongly fortified and protected by earthworks, was carried at a rush by troops for whom the tanks had cleared the way. "The

tanks walked majestically ahead of our advancing line of men," a correspondent has recorded, "and there are those who say that one of the finest sights of a thrilling day was the spectacle of one huge pachyderm sauntering down the main street of Flers all alone, while from among the ruins rifles and machine-guns played on it like pea-shooters."

Londoners entered Flers, occupied and held it, while New Zealanders on the west made a gallant advance. Canadians, with the assistance of tanks, captured Courcellette and held on to it with fine gallantry. In three days the new advance had made considerable progress. On the British right the French also went forward and ultimately captured Combles.

Meanwhile the tanks gave fresh proof of their usefulness. One which advanced boldly beyond Flers got isolated and was surrounded by German infantry, some of whom scrambled on to the top of it. Others turned machine-guns on it and threw bombs. But the attack proved to be a costly one, for, when British infantry rushed forward, they found lying around the tank between 200 and 300 German killed and wounded.

At another point a tank waddled out to attack the fortified ruins of a château in which the enemy was in strong force with many machine-guns. The "land ship" lumbered forward, while bullets spattered on it, and

struck the château like a battering-ram. Down came a large portion of the wall and roof, and the enemy gunners ceased fire. The whole garrison surrendered to the British infantry following the tank.

It looked, towards the end of September, as if the combined British and French advance in the Somme valley would have hastened the end of the war. But the autumn rain-storms came on with exceptional fury and at first hampered and ultimately stopped military operations on a big scale. The weather conditions favoured the Germans. They had suffered heavily and were everywhere on the defensive. Every man and gun they could spare had to be concentrated against the victorious British and French armies. The British Commander-in-Chief, reporting on the situation in November, summarized the important results of the offensive when he said: "Verdun had been relieved; the main German force had been held on the Western front; and the enemy's strength had been very considerably worn down".

## CHAPTER XIV

### Winter Battles for Position

Before the winter set in there came a brief spell of good weather, and Haig, taking advantage of it, struck severe blows against the Germans. One was on the Albert-Bapaume road. The main defence of Bapaume was that formidable knoll on the right of the road, beyond the village of Le Sars, known as the Butte de Warlencourt. Before it was beaten by shells into a shapeless mass, the knoll was about fifty feet high and several hundred yards round the base. The Germans had riddled it with trenches and tunnels and turned its prehistoric burial chambers into "dug-outs". Its defence works were elaborate and well protected and the enemy believed the Butte to be impregnable. On 5th November, when the garrison was being relieved, the Durhams attacked it, and captured its southern and western sides. An officer even reached the summit, and, concealing himself, signalled messages to direct the British artillery fire. On the night

of the 6th, the Durhams were heavily attacked by German reinforcements in massed strength, and compelled to withdraw. Before they left the Butte, however, they did great damage to its defences, and, retreating, took their prisoners with them. The value of this attack was proved about three months later, when the Germans found it necessary to evacuate the Butte without a struggle.

The severest blow was struck between Beaumont-Hamel on the right hand of the river Ancre and St. Pierre Divion on the left. This action became known as the Battle of the Ancre. The German defences were very strong. Beaumont-Hamel village is situated on a plateau, the slopes of which were elaborately entrenched and protected by tremendous masses of barbed wire in four or five tiers and at places over 7 feet high and 100 feet broad. Between Beaumont-Hamel and the river is the "Y ravine", as it was called, after its shape, and higher up lay, in a hollow, the strongly fortified village of Beaucourt. On the southern bank of the Ancre, St. Pierre Divion lay on the road running north over Thiepval ridge. The Germans were in strong force.

After two days' artillery bombardment the British infantry attack was delivered on both sides of the river at 6 a.m. on 13th November. A ground fog prevented the Germans witness-

ing the preparatory concentration, and they were taken by surprise. On the south the battered defences were carried at a rush, many Germans being trapped in their dug-outs and tunnels. A tank helped to wreck their machine-gun defences. An hour after the infantry went forward the prisoners taken were more numerous than the attackers.

The Germans put up a firmer resistance in the north. Good progress was made in parts, but a redoubt checked part of the British line which was advancing on Beaucourt. It was surrounded but held out until early next morning when a tank arrived, the sight of which was sufficient to make the enemy capitulate. Beaucourt was briskly attacked and taken in about twenty minutes.

"Y ravine" was the scene of a fierce struggle, being entered from the north and south by fiery Scots, who made resolute bayonet attacks that compelled the Germans to seek refuge in their tunnels, dug-outs, and caves. After prolonged fighting the whole ravine was taken, with about three score machine-guns and over 1400 prisoners.

On the 14th November the attack proceeded towards the north-west. The Battle of the Ancre was won and Haig reported that about 5000 prisoners had been taken.

A feature of the winter fighting on the Western front was what our soldiers called



"the Bogie Raid". When snow lay heavily on "No Man's Land" German soldiers stole out at night wearing white "overalls" to raid the British trenches. This method was quickly and successfully adopted by our men. On one occasion the Gordon Highlanders were clad in white and had their steel helmets painted white. Some even whitened their faces and hands. They stole out in the faint moonlight and crawled out over the snow towards the German position. When they were close to the trenches, the British guns opened a heavy but brief bombardment. The Gordons then dashed forward, and, having disposed of the sentries, surrounded several deep and commodious dug-outs. When threatened by bombs the inmates of most of these submitted and were taken prisoners. One dug-out party showed fight, and bombs were thrown down, with the result that the woodwork took fire and blazed so furiously that the snow above its roof of logs was melted and water poured in a torrent into the adjoining trenches. In the light of this fire fierce fighting took place, but the Gordons prevailed. Another dug-out was entered by the attackers and, after a show of resistance, the survivors within it surrendered. The Gordons were able to withdraw with their prisoners and spoils of battle before German reinforcements could be brought up.

"Bogie raids" of this kind were numerous

during the winter. The constant pressure kept up by the British was not without effect, for, when the thaw set in, the enemy began to retreat from the entrenched positions along a wide front.

## CHAPTER XV

### French Victories at Verdun

The Germans made one of their last desperate attacks on the Verdun front between 11th and 15th July, when they tried to break through the French lines in the Fleury area; but although they gained ground they were ultimately thrown back. For some weeks afterwards the fighting swayed backward and forward. At the beginning of September the Germans again endeavoured to advance on the south-west of Fort Vaux, but the small success they achieved was but temporary, as the French delivered a vigorous counter-attack and regained the lost ground. The situation in the Somme valley had meantime grown so serious that every available man and gun had to be transported thither by the Germans, their strength on the Verdun front being in consequence seriously reduced. They were unable to attack with success, or, as it proved, even to hold against a French advance the positions they had won at so great a cost in men and material. But they thought themselves safe enough, believing that the

French reserves had been fully used up in the Somme valley. In this they were mistaken. The time came when the French saw their opportunity, and they were not slow to act. Large numbers of big guns and a strong force of French infantry were concentrated to avenge the losses which had been sustained earlier in the year.

On the 24th October the French began their offensive. It was a misty day, one on which an attack might well be thrown into confusion, especially as the army was a mixed one, consisting largely of French Colonial troops with bluejackets. But the plans had been well laid, and the gallant force went forward in fine style, preceded by a heavy and accurate barrage of shrapnel and high-explosive shells. The Germans were taken by surprise. They had expected an attack, but not in such force, or on such a day, and confusion spread among their ranks. On swept the attackers, overcoming German resistance on the left, until they ultimately reached Fort Douaumont, which was taken at a sweep. Fort Vaux on the right was thus exposed, but was strongly held by machine-gunners. The enemy believed that the attack was to have been concentrated on this sector, and had massed to resist it. On the right of Fort Vaux the Damloup position was taken by the French, and for a few days the struggle for the Fort Vaux ridge was waged continuously

and fiercely. By 4th November, however, the fort and village of Vaux were in French hands, and preparations were at once set on foot to throw back the German line still farther. The attacks were continued with the aid of young soldiers, who fought like veterans. Much ground was regained on both sides of the River Meuse. On 15th December fresh French attacks were pressed home with success and, in a few days, the Germans on the east side of the Meuse had lost much of the ground they had won during their great offensive, including the dominating positions. 'Ten months' successes were wiped out in a few weeks. Not only did the French capture four villages, five forts, and great networks of trenches and redoubts, but shattered about six German divisions. Their prisoners numbered over 11,000, while they captured 115 large guns and 107 machine-guns. The French losses were under 2000. Thus did the long battle for Verdun end in a victory for the defenders. Further successes were to be achieved later.

Although the Germans were unable to retake Fort Douaumont and the other strong positions wrested from them by the French, they kept up during the winter and spring months incessant artillery bombardments by day and night. A remarkable thing about Douaumont is that, although it was hammered for months by German and French shells, its underground structure

suffered little damage. Over 20 feet of earth covered the concreted galleries, which, lit with electricity, afforded shelter from shell-fire for about 1000 men. The Kaiser, in one of his proclamations, referred to Douaumont as "the key to France". That was when it had been captured. After the Germans were driven out of it, they protested that it was "an empty shell" and a "place of no military value".

## CHAPTER XVI

### Italy's Struggle for Freedom

The great Italian offensive of 1916 had been made possible by the preparatory work accomplished during the previous year. In 1915 Italy's chief service to the Allied cause was in immobilizing 800,000 Austrian troops, of whom about 30,000 were taken prisoners, thus reducing the pressure against Russia and preventing Germany's ally from assisting her on the Western front to the degree which would have been possible had Italy remained neutral. Italy's war plan was to conduct an offensive on its eastern Isonzo front towards Gorizia and Trieste, and regain its ancient territory peopled chiefly by Italians. But before this could be attempted in force the northern Trentino and Cadore fronts had to be dealt with, because the Austrian frontier included those strategic positions from which a flank attack on the main Italian armies could be delivered. Immense natural difficulties had to be overcome on the northern fronts. Deep ravines had to be cleared and precipitous

heights captured along a great front of mountainous country. The difficult fighting turned in Italy's favour, and important strategic positions were wrested from Austria. Progress was also made on the Isonzo front, where the Italians displayed much valour and determination in conducting a series of thrusting operations, which resulted in the gain of much ground, and in taking them across the Isonzo River.

In May, 1916, the Austrians opened a strong offensive in the Trentino, adopting tactics similar to those of the Germans attacking Verdun. About 400,000 men with 2000 guns were employed on a front of 30 miles. Out-gunned, the Italians had part of their line driven in, and a dangerous loop formed in the centre. A strategic retreat was effected to neutralize this Austrian success. But the enemy pressure continued until a double loop was formed, which extended south of Asiago. Again the Italians retreated, fighting heavily and inflicting considerable losses on the attackers. By 25th May the situation had become critical. The Austrians seemed on the point of breaking through the Italian line so as to sweep into the plains. It was of vital importance that the Italians should hold the Buole Pass on the left wing, for if the enemy succeeded in hammering their way through it, the left Italian flank would be in danger of being isolated and surrounded. On the right the



Austrians pushed on and captured Asiago, a point of strategic importance.

Meanwhile, General Cadorna, the Italian leader, sent to the northern storm-centre the Fifth Italian Army, which was intended to take part in the attack on Gorizia on the eastern Isonzo front. It was necessary to prevent the Austrians reaching the Venetian plain, towards which their right wing was bulging.

On the left the enemy made fierce endeavours to capture the Buole Pass, but were frustrated, their final attempt on 30th May failing completely, with the heavy loss of about 7000 men. The Austrians, however, achieved a success in their centre by capturing Mount Cimone and forcing the Italians back to almost the very edge of the plains. To achieve this success, the Austrians had sacrificed, during the month's fighting, in this rugged and wooded mountain country, about 100,000 men. Their "push" was continued at various points until the middle of June, but they had "shot their bolt", and the fighting degenerated into an artillery duel.

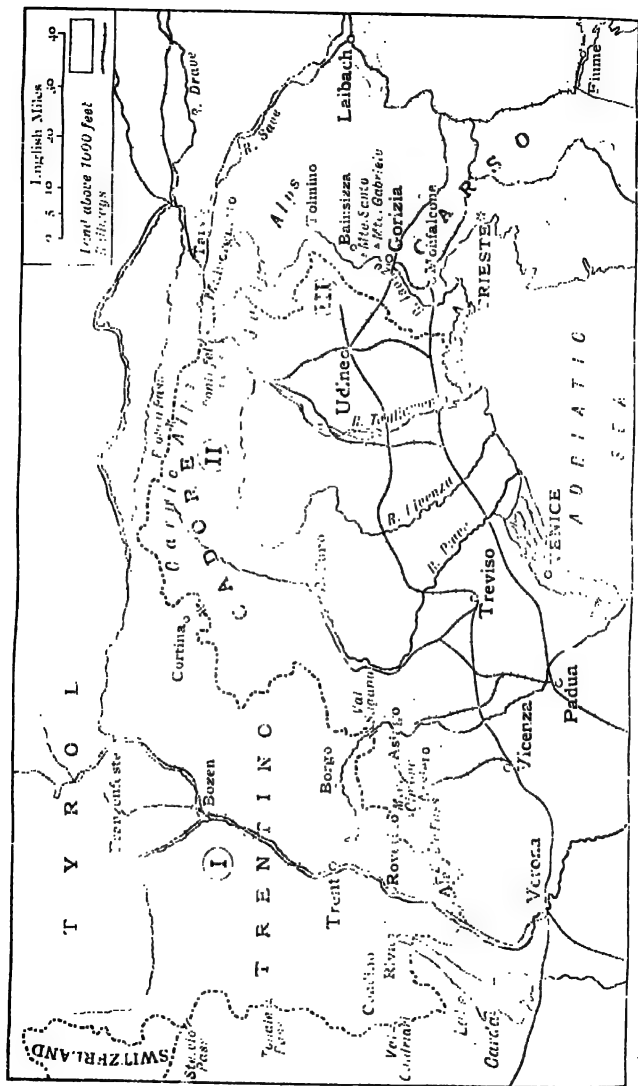
On 16th June the Italians struck back with the aid of the Fifth Army, and in the course of a week the Austrians were retreating on their right, burning the towns of Arsiero and Asiago as they retired. Their great offensive thus failed completely. Large masses of men were confined in difficult country, and the Russian front was breaking into flame, Brussiloff having



### THROUGH CLOUDS OF POISON GAS

British troops raiding the German lines

The Germans wore gas helmets containing canisters and chemical filters much larger than the nozzles of the British helmets. On both sides hand's and bayonets were the principal weapons. The type of helmet worn by the British in this picture was in use previous to the introduction of the most efficient of all protections against gas—the Small Box Respirator.



opened a vigorous offensive. The Italians kept up a steady pressure, but did not throw their whole weight into the exploitation of their initial victories. Indeed, after achieving these successes, General Cadorna began to withdraw troops from the north so as to open his delayed offensive on the Isonzo front, which he did early in August. The Austrians had gambled on a success in the north, and, having failed, were unable to withdraw the bulk of their forces from a country with few roads and railways, so as to render assistance when Gorizia was threatened. The Italians made a sweeping advance and burst through the strong defences of Gorizia, which they entered on 10th August. About 10,000 Austrian prisoners were captured.

The enemy then fell back on the heights to the east of the city. To the south the Italians battled their way across the Carso over ground which was difficult and well fortified, capturing trenches lined with concrete and steel, and driving the enemy out of caves and earthworks that sheltered their machine-gun companies. The middle part of the Carso has many a ridge and height, but the Italians could not be checked before they had established themselves securely across the mountain crest. In eleven days they had taken nearly 19,000 prisoners, 30 big guns, 63 bomb-throwers, 92 machine-guns and thousands of rifles.

Subsequent progress in so difficult a country

was necessarily slow, but by the middle of September other heights were taken which the Austrians had hoped to hold as artillery positions. A vigorous "push" on 10th and 11th October resulted in the gain of more ground and the taking of 7000 Austrian prisoners. Another local offensive on 2nd and 3rd November improved the Italian positions among the hills.

Thus, as at Verdun, the enemy were forced to look back on a year of fighting which began full of promise of success for them, but ended in disastrous losses.

On the Austro-Russian front, the Russians, during the summer, had taken advantage of the withdrawal of troops for the Trentino campaign. The Austro-Hungarian armies were driven back on a wide front, and Germany had to send troops to their aid, the Central Powers having lost in prisoners alone about 400,000 officers and men, while they were forced to abandon 451 guns and about 1400 machine-guns.

In Asia Minor the Russians, who early in the year had captured Erzerum, Musk, and Bitlis, were in a favourable position to take a fourth offensive against the Turks. They showed signs of activity in July by raiding the Euphrates valley and pushing into Armenia. Musk was lost by a counter-stroke delivered by the Turks, but the Russians retook it in

August. Internal troubles in Russia were growing, however, and the opportunity of striking a shattering blow against Turkey in Asia Minor, which would have automatically freed Mesopotamia and Palestine from Turkish sway, could not be taken advantage of. The revolutionists prevented Russia from achieving the triumphs for which she had striven, and the war was consequently prolonged.

## CHAPTER XVII

### Greece, Bulgaria, and Roumania

The Verdun and Somme valley operations were followed with keen interest in the Balkans. "Verdun will decide the war," declared King Ferdinand of Bulgaria to an interviewer early in the year. In a sense he was right. He had hoped for a German success and not for a failure which was to cripple his strong ally on the Western front. The situation in Greece was a critical one for the Allied cause. King Constantine, the brother-in-law of the Kaiser, had refused to fulfil his treaty obligations and assist Serbia when that country was overrun by the Austro-German and Bulgarian armies, and during the greater part of 1916 gave cause for suspicion, only too well founded, that he was manœuvring to take the part of Germany. A revolt against his unconstitutional acts, which had long been simmering, took definite shape in October, when Venizelos, the ex-Premier, formed a Provisional Greek Government at Salonika, which was recognized by the Allies. Venizelos declared war against Bulgaria on

27th November. He had the sympathy of the masses of the Greek people, and eventually King Constantine was dethroned.

The Allied successes in the Somme valley, and Russian successes against Austria, stirred national feeling in Roumania so deeply that towards the end of August she definitely espoused the Allied cause and declared war on Austria-Hungary. Germany, Bulgaria, and Turkey soon afterwards declared war on Roumania.

It was believed at first that Roumania would invade Bulgaria and cut the railway leading to Constantinople, thus isolating Turkey from the Central Powers. She elected, however, to invade the Austro-Hungarian province of Transylvania, which was largely peopled by Roumanians. She at first achieved a spectacular success, but the northern movement left the Bulgarian border weakly protected. The Germans saw their opportunity in this quarter and were not slow to take advantage of it. Field-Marshal Mackensen collected an army of Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians and Turks, and crossed the Danube from Bulgaria. The Roumanians were heavily defeated, and this disaster re-acted speedily on the advance of the Roumanian army into Transylvania, where it was being opposed by an Austro-German army under General von Falkenhayn. Gradually the Roumanians in the north were driven back, and in October Mackensen was



advancing rapidly. Ultimately he was able so to extend his operations as to join forces with Falkenhayn and commence a sweep through Roumania which resulted in the conquest of the greater part of that country. Bucharest, the capital, was abandoned, as were also the rich oil-fields and the great wheat plains. By the end of the year the Roumanian army was on the defensive along the line of the River Sereth.

While Roumania was suffering the martyrdom of invasion and conquest, the Allied forces on the Salonika front were advancing successfully into Macedonia. On 19th November Monastir was captured. The reorganized Serbian army fought with great gallantry and advanced to the north of Monastir.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### The Conquest of Mesopotamia

During the critical days of the spring of 1916, when the Germans were hammering at the gates of Verdun, the situation in Mesopotamia looked dark. The British force under General Townshend, which had been invested at the Kut-el-Amara loop of the Tigris River, was compelled to surrender in April to the Turks on account of the shortage of supplies of food and ammunition. This was a decided blow to British prestige in the East, and the direct result of inadequate military preparations. After Lieutenant-General Sir F. Stanley Maude was appointed Commander-in-Chief in Mesopotamia the situation, however, took a change for the better. The British force was thoroughly reorganized, the railway line was extended, and the river transport system made thoroughly efficient.

By the month of December a British force was again advancing successfully on the road to Bagdad. Kut-el-Amara was captured on Christmas Eve after a series of brilliant opera-

tions, and the Turks were then in full retreat. From this point the British navy took part in the forward movement as it had done in Egypt when Kitchener advanced up the Nile towards Khartoum. Special river warships had been constructed at home and sent out to Mesopotamia, and their rapid and accurate fire inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. The Turks set mines adrift in the river, but these were successfully dodged by the nimble warships. At times the flotilla came under heavy fire at close range, but its advance could not be stayed. A naval officer gives a vivid description of a lively encounter with the Turkish land force. "There were", he relates, "casualties in all three ships, but our guns must have caused immense damage to the enemy, as we were at one time firing 6-inch guns into them at about 400 to 500 yards. Besides the Turkish artillery there were a large number of enemy, with rifles and machine-guns, behind the river bend at a range of about 100 yards from the ships."

As the vessels came round the bend, the fighting was of desperate character. A good many casualties were sustained, especially by the leading vessel, but the daring navy men never flinched and ultimately overcame the Turks.

"We passed the enemy rear-guard", the officer continues, "and large numbers of the





retreating Turkish army were on our starboard beam. I opened rapid fire from all guns that would bear (this included heavy and light guns, pom-poms, Maxims, and rifles), and at this short range we did enormous execution, the enemy being too demoralized to reply, except in a few cases. We were also able to shoot down some of their gun teams, which they deserted, and several guns thus fell into the hands of our forces when going over this ground." Meanwhile the retreating Turks were followed closely by British cavalry. The pursuit was continued briskly for several days, and great quantities of enemy equipment were captured over 80 miles of ground. The Turkish river craft fell into the hands of the British naval force.

This sweeping success brought General Maude by 1st March to Azizi, which was 50 miles distant from Bagdad. The Turks continued to retreat, and, although hampered by the heat and by dust-storms, the British advance continued rapidly and successfully, with the result that the Turks were not given time or opportunity to make a stand. On 7th March the British advance-guard came into touch with the enemy on the banks of the River Dialah, which flows into the Tigris. The Turks had been reinforced from Bagdad, which was only about 8 miles distant, and had resolved to make a stand. At this point the ground is very flat, and the crossing of the

river was no easy task to attempt, as the enemy was strong in artillery and had numerous machine-guns. A night attack in moonlight was made on 7th-8th March, but was only a qualified success. It was not until the morning of the 10th that a portion of the British force crossed the River Dialah, while another column crossed the Tigris. The Turks counter-attacked vigorously, but without success. British cavalry patrols pressed forward to the outskirts of Bagdad, contending against not only enemy fire but a terrible dust-storm. Men and animals suffered greatly from want of water. But the opposition had been broken. It was discovered that the enemy were in full retreat, and General Maude, pressing forward, entered Bagdad on 11th March without opposition, a few hours after it had been evacuated. He found the city in great disorder. Arabs and Kurds were robbing and pillaging in the bazaars for several hours, and the inhabitants welcomed the British with enthusiasm and gratitude. Before long complete order was restored. When, in the afternoon, the British naval flotilla arrived, the streets were being policed by British soldiers, and the Union Jack was fluttering over the city.

General Maude lost no time in pressing north for the purpose of breaking further Turkish resistance, and to secure control of the upper reaches of the River Tigris, so as to prevent

the enemy from tampering with the canals and flooding part of the city. The annual inundation of the Tigris was at hand, and it was necessary that Bagdad should be rendered safe from attack.

British prestige in the East, which had been lowered by the Kut-el-Amara surrender, was raised to a high pitch by General Maude's successful advance. The possession of Bagdad was regarded as a brilliant proof of British power. All through the British Empire the triumph was hailed with enthusiasm. Coming at a time when our gallant soldiers in the Somme valley on the Western front were establishing their superiority over the Germans as fighting men, it confirmed the belief that ultimate victory lay with the Allied cause.

The German-led Turks were buoyed up by the hope that they would ultimately reconquer Bagdad, but they were gradually driven back towards Mosul, and were never to recover the territory they had lost. General Maude's great pursuit of 110 miles in fifteen days had broken, for ever, Turkish power in southern Mesopotamia.



## CHAPTER XIX

### Exit Russia: Enter America

Two events of supreme importance took place in 1917. One was the collapse of Russia and the other the entry of America into the war. The disasters of 1915, including the loss of Warsaw, had, combined with the shortage of food, intensified the revolutionary movement in Russia. There were signs of trouble early in 1916, and towards the end of the year not only the agriculturists and artisans, but also the soldiers, were thinking more of revolution than of the war. In the end troops which were sent to Petrograd to suppress the revolutionary movement became mutinous, and the Duma called upon the Tsar to abdicate. The Tsar found it necessary to give his consent, and signed an Act of Abdication at a late hour on 15th March, bequeathing his crown to his brother, the Grand-Duke Michael. The last words in this historic document were: "May God help Russia."

The Grand-Duke was swept aside by the revolutionary storm that followed. A Govern-

ment, called "representative", was formed under the Premiership or Dictatorship of Kerensky, who established a system of army committees which destroyed military discipline. A Republic was proclaimed on 15th September, and on 7th November, Kerensky's Dictatorship came to an end, and the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin and Trotsky, seized the reins of government.

Meanwhile the Germans and Austrians advanced their lines, Russia's military resistance having gone to pieces. In December the Bolsheviks asked for an armistice, which was granted, and continued until the Peace Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed in March, 1918. It involved the loss to Russia of 1,400,000 square kilometres and a population of about 65,000,000.

The break-down of Russia was a serious blow to the cause of the Allies, but it was, in time, more than compensated for by the intervention of the United States of America, which was capable of supplying greater and better-equipped armies than Russia. From the outbreak of war in 1914, public opinion in America was favourable to the Allied cause, but its intervention, although inevitable, was delayed because the country was not directly concerned in the great struggle. When, however, Germany extended its submarine operations, and, in defiance of all promises made, set out to destroy American

sea-commerce, America was forced to take action. Further, it was found that the diplomatic representatives of Germany and Austria were fostering serious political trouble by means of agents and bribery. The crash came in February, when Germany let it be known to all neutral Powers that allied and neutral shipping found in British waters, and in the Mediterranean, except in narrow routes, would be sunk at sight. Diplomatic relations between America and Germany were broken off on 3rd February, and on 2nd April America formally declared war.

Like Great Britain in 1914, America was not, in 1917, prepared for war except at sea. A great army had to be raised, trained, and equipped, and then transported across the Atlantic. Time was therefore required, and a great deal of shipping had to be provided. In Germany it was therefore considered necessary that the submarine campaign should be waged with great vigour and intensity, so that the number of available vessels required for the carrying of food, munitions, and troops should be reduced to the lowest possible point. The public were assured that American intervention was hardly worth considering. American troops, it was argued, would never be trained and brought across the Atlantic in time to succour the Allies, against whom the forces held up hitherto by Russia on the Eastern front

would be engaged, so that a "knock out" blow might be delivered, while German submarines would sink the American transports and permit of but a small proportion of American troops reaching France. Belief in the ultimate triumph of their arms grew stronger in Germany during the early part of 1917 than it had been since the early days of the war, when Belgium and France were invaded. But the German army on the Western front was not so confident. During the autumn and winter of 1916, and the spring of 1917, many of the prisoners taken by the British and French professed the belief that they had no hope of victory. Captured letters written by soldiers in dug-outs similarly reflected the pessimistic feelings which were creeping through the German army. On the other hand, the spirit of confidence in Great Britain in ultimate victory was strengthened by the Somme successes.

## CHAPTER XX

### The Great German Retreat

Not only was the German *moral* affected by the Somme fighting. The war lords found it necessary to prepare, during the winter, for a retreat from the Somme salient, and a series of elaborate defences, which became known as the Hindenburg Line, were prepared in their rear. This retreat shortened the German line by 40 miles, and set free large numbers of troops which could be added to their reserves and utilized, with the troops drawn from the Russian front, for an offensive.

In February, 1917, the Germans were retreating between Albert and Bapaume, and the British, moving forward, captured the fortified village of Pys on the left. The Butte de Warlencourt, which had been the scene of heavy fighting in the previous November, was abandoned by the Germans without a struggle. Warlencourt village fell on the 26th, and two days later the British had occupied Thilling, which is only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Bapaume. The

Germans were prepared to make a stand in the town, hoping to inflict heavy casualties in street fighting before abandoning it.

Early in March, however, the whole British line was advanced, hampering the enemy retreat by its rapid movements, from Arras southward to Roye Road. Bapaume was gradually evacuated, and the Germans set fire to it and retreated. It was entered on 17th March by the Australians, headed by a brass band, while yet the smouldering houses were tumbling down. British troops swept through Peronne on the following day and found it in a similar state. The French also advanced on the right.

It was necessary, the Germans having shortened their line, for the British and French to assume the offensive so as to hold the enemy reserves and disorganize their plans. That new defensive system, the Hindenburg line, was a very formidable one: its north-west pillar, Vimy Ridge, a dominating height to the north-east of Arras. It was arranged by the Allies that Haig should deliver an attack at this point, while the French, under General Nivelle's direction, should open an offensive between Soissons and Rheims, with Laon as the objective, striking at the southern bastion of the Hindenburg line, from which the retreat from the Somme salient was being swung.

The Vimy Ridge is the most important

height on a rough tableland, on which there are woods, sunken roads, strong earthworks, and collieries. The Germans had fortified the whole position so well that they regarded it as impregnable.

In concentrating troops for the Vimy offensive, Haig was able to take advantage of the cover afforded by the Arras quarries, while his airmen attacked the German observation balloons with success, thus "blinding the eyes of the enemy".

After a severe preliminary bombardment, Haig delivered his attack on a 15-mile front, about six of which was against the Hindenburg line, on 9th April, 1917. It was Easter Monday, the morning sky was clouded, and a drizzle of rain fell. Over 1000 guns roared along the front, forming a moving barrage, behind which the attackers went forward. The breadth of the triple system of German trenches varied from 2 to 5 miles, but so effective was the artillery bombardment that the wire entanglements were demolished and strong earthworks greatly damaged. The first line was taken in about three-quarters of an hour, except on the north end of Vimy Ridge. By midday, however, this point, known as "Observation Ridge", was overwhelmed. The resistance set up by the "Observation" garrison delayed the general advance, but two hours after it fell the second line had been taken and the third

breached at more than one point. The greater portion of Vimy Ridge, which had been tunnelled elaborately, was in British hands, and large numbers of prisoners were taken, including a German brigade general with his whole staff, who had thought themselves secure in a deep dug-out. Hill 145 held out until the following day, when it was taken by Canadians. Other successes were achieved. Scottish and English troops kept up a steady pressure on the south of the Scarpe, and early on the 11th two English infantry brigades which came into action, supported by tanks, swept into Monchy village, engaging in a desperate struggle when the enemy counter-attacked. The weather was bad, and delayed the bringing forward of heavy artillery. On the 12th, however, the big guns were in the desired position, and the Germans were subjected to a concentrated bombardment. Then the British line moved forward again, and the whole of Vimy Ridge was captured and other strategic points taken. The success completely upset German plans. Driven from the heights, the enemy could not rally for an effective counter-attack, and had to fall back. They were quickly followed, and had to abandon guns and stores. It was with the utmost difficulty that they prevented the retreat becoming a disaster. After being driven 4 miles westward, their reinforcements, which had been hurriedly brought up, strengthened their re-



sistance and prevented demoralizing disorganization in their ranks.

The British victory of Arras-Vimy was a brilliant success. About 13,000 prisoners and 200 guns were captured, and a wide gap was made in defences on which the Germans had rested their hopes. Vimy Ridge was consolidated by the British. Its possession was in itself of marked importance. A further result of the battle was that the Germans had to draw heavily on their reserves. The British guns hammered their positions and their casualties were heavy. Haig thus did much to neutralize the advantage gained by the enemy in retreating from the Somme salient to shorten his line and increase his reserves.

General Nivelle's double offensive between Soissons and Rheims was opened on 16th April between Laffaux and Barry-au-Bac and on the 17th in the direction of the heights of Moronvilliers, east of Rheims. The first is known as the Battle of Craonne, or the Battle of Chemin-des-Dames, and the second as the Battle of Moronvilliers. The German positions were naturally strong and had been well fortified. A degree of progress was achieved by the French, who captured over 20,000 prisoners, 175 guns, 119 trench mortars, and 412 machine-guns, but their own losses were very heavy and the chief objectives were not won. Nivelle, who had succeeded Joffre in the High Com-

mand, was supplanted by General Petain until General Foch returned later. Petain did not persist with the costly offensive, but made thrusts which improved the French position on the Chemin-des-Dames plateau.

## CHAPTER XXI

### German Campaign of Piracy

The war at sea assumed a grave aspect in 1917. Germany had decided to wage an unrestricted submarine campaign by sinking, at sight, Allied and neutral trading vessels that came within large ocean areas included in their "war zone". Even hospital ships were not to be spared. This policy was announced from Berlin with arrogant grandiloquence. It was believed that it would bring the war to an end in six months.

A remarkable feature of this decision was that it was made at a time when negotiations were still in progress with the United States, which claimed that recognition should be given to the fact that citizens of neutral countries travelled in Allied trading vessels, and should not be treated as if they were belligerents. The German war lords had, however, made up their minds, and took the risk entailed by insulting America, and of bringing her into the war on the side of the Allies. They believed that a decision would be reached before a for-

midable force of United States soldiers could be raised, trained, and transported to France. They also believed that the U-boats could sink the majority of the American transports in mid-Atlantic. As it happened, German calculations were completely upset. The British defensive methods proved to be more formidable than the war lords of Berlin had anticipated. Heavy losses of Allied and neutral trading vessels were sustained, but the toll taken of German U-boats was likewise heavy-- so heavy, indeed, that the *moral* of enemy submarine crews was in time seriously affected.

Among the many stories which tell how U-boats were captured is one regarding an incident that occurred off the south coast of Ireland. A German prisoner has told that the submarine was lying on the sea-bottom in dead silence when strange and ominous sounds were heard. It seemed to the crew as if someone were tapping the side of the vessel with a hammer. They listened with feelings of mingled fear and astonishment. In time they realized that somebody was tapping out a message in the Morse alphabet. The commander was sent for. He understood English and was conversant with the Morse signals. A pause ensued and he tapped out a question. An answer came very promptly, inviting him to surrender the submarine and conveying the threat that if he refused to do so it would be blown up. The

commander decided to surrender, and on rising found that he was the prisoner of a patrol-boat crew, the commander of which had gone down in a diving dress to tap out the message to him.

Airships and aeroplanes co-operated with the small craft which hunted the U-boats. On a clear day the airmen could detect the submarines moving in the depths of the sea or lying on sandbanks near channels. They sent out wireless messages of warning, and patrol-boats came along to destroy the enemy craft with depth charges. Many U-boats were rammed by torpedo boats. On one occasion a British battleship which was threatened by a submarine ran right into her and cut her in two. The doomed vessel was seen breaking like a nutshell across the bows of the battleship.

The American navy co-operated with the British in the Atlantic and North Sea, while the Japanese co-operated in the Mediterranean with British, French, and Japanese U-boat hunters. The German dream that six months unrestricted U-boat warfare would bring the war to an end proved to be a disastrous one for them. British troops and munitions of war were carried overseas as before and the blockade of Germany was maintained. No military advantage was gained by the Germans, nor was the *moral* of the British people seriously affected by the reduction of food supplies, the air-raids on towns and cities, or

the shelling by U-boats and torpedo-destroyers of seaports by night.

The raids by German light craft were intended to interrupt British communications with France, but in this they failed completely. In October and November, 1916, German destroyers achieved some slight successes off the English coast, but in January and February, 1917, the raiders were roughly handled.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A Famous Destroyer Battle

A thrilling destroyer battle occurred in April, 1917, and resulted in a brilliant British success. No fewer than six enemy vessels were overcome by two of our craft, the *Swift* and the *Broke*.

Under darkness of night the German flotilla had entered the English Channel with the intention, it was believed, of attacking British shipping, and, if the opportunity offered, of shelling defenceless coast towns. The *Swift* and *Broke* were on patrol duty and sighted the enemy at a distance of only 600 yards. Commander Peck of the *Swift* decided at once to ram the leading German destroyer and made a dash at it. The *Swift* missed the enemy by inches, but, swerving round suddenly, fired a torpedo at the second vessel in the line, which was badly crippled. Then she set off in chase of the first vessel, with her guns in action.

The *Broke*, meanwhile, struck the second vessel with a torpedo and swept it with gun-fire. Then Commander Evans directed her against

the third vessel, which he decided to ram. The enemy was firing heavily as the *Broke* raced down on her, successfully discharging a torpedo at the fourth destroyer as she came. The shock of the impact drove the bows of the *Broke* deep into the third German vessel, and, as they lay locked together, the *Broke* raking the enemy's decks with gun-fire, a crowd of Germans climbed aboard the British craft and made a desperate effort to overcome her crew. They were speedily disposed of as the *Broke* "back-watered" and freed herself from the rammed destroyer. Then, getting up speed, the *Broke* endeavoured to ram the sixth German vessel, which, however, managed to escape. A torpedo fired at the fifth struck her in the stern. The *Broke* chased them both as they took flight, until she was crippled by a German shell which entered the boiler room.

Changing her course, the *Broke* headed towards a German destroyer which was on fire. The crew were shouting "Save! save! save!" but when the British destroyer drew near the Germans opened fire. This was an act of treachery, and was dearly paid for, the *Broke* sinking the vessel with a torpedo.

Meanwhile the *Swift* had given up the chase of the first German destroyer and sighted another in distress. Her crew were shouting "We surrender! we surrender!" This was the destroyer which had been rammed by the *Broke*.



The *Swift* turned on her search-lights and saw that she was sinking. Boats were at once lowered to rescue the German sailors, who were leaping into the sea. The *Broke* came up as the work of rescue was in progress, and her crew and that of the *Swift* cheered heartily when details of the fighting were exchanged. Two German destroyers had been seen to go down, a third was believed to have sunk in the darkness. The other three, which had escaped, had suffered considerable damage.

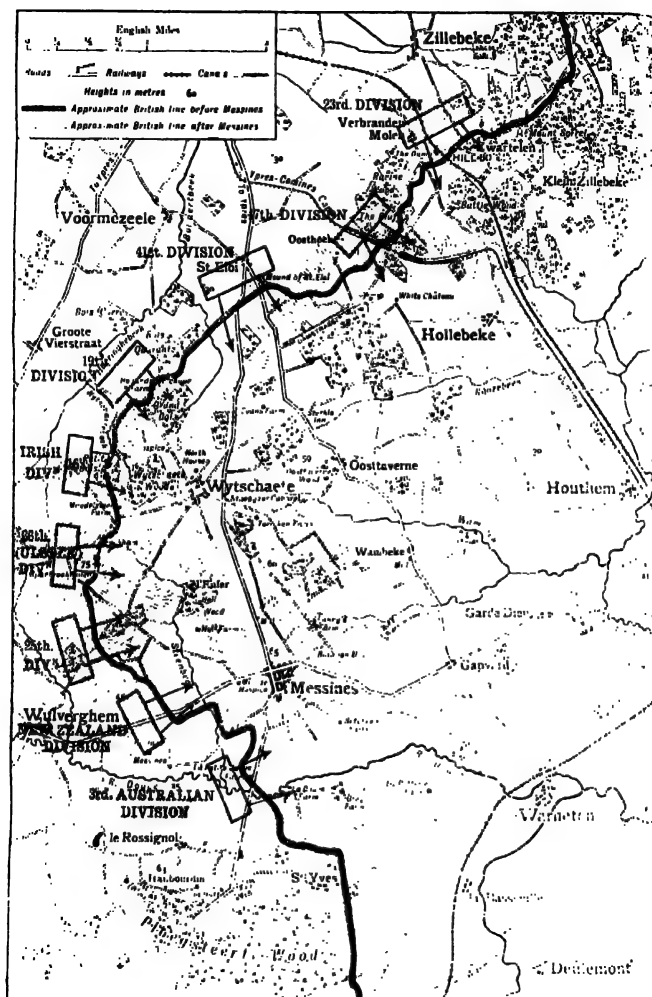
It was gathered from the German prisoners that they thought they were being attacked by a number of British destroyers. The *Swift* and *Broke* had been so cleverly manœuvred that, as they darted about in the darkness, they gave the enemy the impression that they had been "rounded up" by a British flotilla. If there had been three instead of only two British destroyers, it is unlikely that a single German vessel would have escaped.



14.

### SAVING A GUN FROM ENEMY HANDS

Scene among the mountains during the Italian retreat in October, 1917.



st. 1917: 49 create British lines before and after the advance of June, 1917

## CHAPTER XXIII

### Battles of Bullecourt and Messines Ridge

The success achieved in the Arras-Vimy battle was followed up by "Haig the Hammerer", who recognized "that many months of heavy fighting would be necessary before the enemy's troops could be reduced to a condition which would permit of a rapid advance". Both the British and French still believed that the co-operation of Russia could be counted on, despite the revolution in that country, assurances having been received in that connection. Indeed, Brussiloff was preparing for a great offensive against the Austrians in Galicia, while Italy expected to make further progress on the Isonzo front.

A minor British offensive, which was little more than a demonstration, was opened in the Lens area. It fulfilled its part, however, for the Germans rushed large masses of troops to this region. Haig thus reduced their power to concentrate for an offensive farther south, and left them in doubt whether the Arras "push"

would be persisted in. Meanwhile a new campaign was being planned. It was to be opened in June with the battle of Messines. To ensure its initial success, by diverting the attention of the enemy, the Arras front was kept in a condition of continual activity. There were frequent heavy bombardments and feint attacks that made the Germans believe the coming blow was to be delivered in this area. The operations had a secondary purpose. Haig was determined to consolidate his hold on that part of the Hindenburg line won by the Australians early in May. Preparations were made to capture Bullecourt, and a Titanic struggle was waged for the possession of this strong position. It was not captured until 17th May, although ten days earlier a footing was secured in the south-east corner of the village. This success would never have been achieved but for the magnificent fighting qualities displayed by the Australians, who had captured about 1000 yards of double trench, and for a fortnight held it against incessant counter-attacks. Haig characterized their stand as "a most gallant feat of arms". On the right of the Australians' isolated position were the unbroken defences of the Hindenburg line, and on the left the strongly-fortified village of Bullecourt. Pounded by artillery and trench-mortars, and subjected to frequent attacks by day and night, they held on with remarkable tenacity. Even when the

Germans surrounded them they continued to fight gallantly, determined that if they had to abandon their position they would cut their way through the enemy rather than yield. English and Scottish troops displayed similar sterling qualities, and by the middle of June the Arras operations were successfully completed. But by this time public interest in the British operations on the Western front had shifted to the north, a brilliant victory having been won by General Plumer at Messines.

This battle began on 7th June, 1917, and was waged for the possession of Messines Ridge, which the Germans had held for nearly three years, and regarded as impregnable. The ridge was protected by earthworks, trenches, concrete forts underground, in which machine-guns were concealed, a complicated system of tunnels connecting with spacious dug-outs, and masses of barbed-wire entanglements. Strong forces of Germans occupied the ridge, and behind it were railway lines for rushing up troops to points subjected to concentrated attack. One advantage of the ridge was that it commanded a wide prospect of the flat country occupied by the British. The concentration of men and artillery could be observed and interrupted by shell-fire, while preparations could be made to resist an impending attack.

"No one could dare to attack Messines Ridge", wrote a German officer, "but the cool,

calculating British. For long months they made cunning and thorough preparations, and did not come out into the open until they had struck a hidden blow."

In other words, the Germans were beaten at their own game. During the winter our Engineers, including Australians and New Zealanders, who were expert miners, drove long and deep tunnels under the German position. An elaborate system of underground galleries was constructed and supported by timber, and these were packed with hundreds of tons of explosives. The Germans, who deemed themselves safe from shell-fire as they sheltered in concrete-lined dug-outs were, unknown to themselves, resting on roofs of great powder-magazines. In all nineteen gigantic mines were formed. The explosives were packed up with earth and great boulders, and connected with electric-wires which were attached to switch-boards. On these switch-boards were buttons, which had only to be pressed, as soon as the electric current was turned on, so as to explode the mines.

Before the battle was opened it was practised some miles behind the lines, where a model of the ridge had been constructed. On this model all the German earthworks were shown. The plan of battle having been arranged, every move was rehearsed. Commanding officers were shown what they were expected to do, and

what points they were expected to reach at a given time. Nothing was left to chance. It was shown how the ridge would be affected by the explosions of the mines, and what the artillery bombardment would accomplish. The "cool, calculating British" left nothing to chance.

General Plumer, who was in command of the attacking force, had resolved to deliver a sudden and surprise attack. Men and guns were concentrated in great force. The artillery positions were carefully selected and concealed, and the shell-fire was organized. Every gun was so placed as to accomplish something definite.

Before a mine was exploded, the British artillery pounded the ridge for a week. A constant tornado of high-explosive shells and shrapnel swept the German positions, while a barrage, which was showered behind the ridge, prevented food, water, and reinforcements from being brought up. By day and by night the shell-fire enwrapped the ridge, which smoked like a volcano.

The British airmen hovered overhead, noting the effects of the bombardment. Their photographic records were carefully studied, and, when it was found that the guns had accomplished what was expected of them, it was decided to strike the final blow on a Thursday morning. At three o'clock, just as dawn was beginning to colour the eastern sky, the order



was given to explode the mines. The artillery was by now "at full blast", sweeping the ridge with concentrated fury. Then suddenly, the electric buttons having been pressed, the ground rocked as nineteen tremendous explosions took place. It was an experience never to be forgotten. Great tongues of fire leapt into the air through thick volumes of smoke and debris. Cemented fortresses, earthworks, dug-outs, and tunnels were wrecked in a moment, magazines were exploded, shell dumps were blown to fragments, and guns, men, and horses destroyed in the outburst of fire and smoke. Thousands of the enemy were killed, wounded, and dazed. The whole plain trembled as if under the influence of an earthquake, and the roar of exploding mines was heard many miles distant. Meanwhile the British guns never ceased to spurt forth shell and flame. The positions exposed by the exploding mines were pounded fiercely, so as to prevent the enemy from rallying to resist the impending attack.

While yet great pillars of smoke were hovering about the brightening sky, the British infantry went forward. A heavy barrage pounded the positions in front of them, and another barrage hampered the rushing forward of German reinforcements, which were summoned by rockets that sprayed green, red, and white stars in the murky air. The attack could not be held back. Great gaps yawned

in the defence works, the barbed-wire entanglements had been swept away by shell-fire as straw is by a whirlwind, earthworks had been wrecked or obliterated, and the forts that remained were isolated, and could consequently be surrounded and dealt with in detail. The Germans surrendered readily. Many came out of their dug-outs, throwing up their hands and shouting "Kamerad, kamerad!" It was found that a large proportion of them had been dazed and unnerved by the constant artillery fire and the mine explosions. Not a few expressed surprise that they were still alive.

The first-line defences were speedily taken, and our troops swept forward with scarcely a pause towards the summit of the ridge, which was occupied before the sun had risen high in the heavens. The German artillery fire had become brisk, but it was not powerful enough to hold up the attack. In about three hours the whole crest of the ridge was in British hands. Soon afterwards Messines village was taken, and before noon the village of Wyt-schaete, which had been strongly fortified, fell before the dashing attacks of the infantry.

The fighting continued during the afternoon and evening until the whole salient, of which the ridge was the centre, was "flattened out". Meanwhile the artillery duel waged furiously, and about seventy German batteries were silenced. When darkness fell the victory was

complete. The battle had been fought "according to time-table", all the objectives having been taken. "Fresh proof", declared a French military critic, "had been given by the British that the Germans are unable to resist them."

Among the many daring deeds accomplished, those that fell to the credit of the airmen are worthy of special mention. They attacked trains which were being moved forward with reinforcements, opened fire with machine-guns on marching troops, attacked aerodromes, and chased motor cars. In those places where tanks could be used these did splendid work. A new and faster type of tank than that used in the Somme offensive was utilized, and one of them captured a strong machine-gun position and took a number of prisoners.

In his message of congratulation to General Plumer, Sir Douglas Haig declared that the victory of Messines "has brought us a long step nearer to the final victorious end of the war". One of the strongest organizations of the enemy on the Western front had been broken in a day.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### Italy in Peril

Italy's 1917 offensive was planned on a large scale, but although it promised much in the interests of the Allied cause, its success was negated by the unexpected developments in Russia, and the insidious influences which were becoming widespread and active within Italy's own frontiers. The defection of Russia permitted Austria, before the summer had passed, to withdraw large masses of troops from the Eastern front and to plan a vigorous counter-offensive. Further, the German "peace offensive" which was being conducted in Italy, as in Russia, was meeting with some success in industrial centres. It appealed to the Pacifists, and one of its results was to sap the loyalty of certain new brigades that were being sent to the front to replace war-worn troops. As early as the month of June, General Cadorna observed signs of disaffection on the Carso front and sent a strong warning to the Government.

The Italian offensive on the Isonzo front

was opened in May. It was supported by an Allied contribution of heavy batteries. The aim was to secure command of the roads leading to Trieste, and this entailed an advance of about 12 miles across the Carso plateau, the western part of which had been seized in 1916, after Gorizia was taken, and the conquest of the Bainsizza plateau to the north of the Carso.

On 14th May, after a three days' bombardment, the offensive was opened on a 20-mile front to the north and south of Gorizia. Several strategic points in the north were taken in the course of a week, and over 6000 prisoners were captured. A surprise attack was then delivered in the south, and 9000 prisoners were taken on the first day. British monitors co-operated with the Italian troops on the coast line, and the Italian artillery was further strengthened by ten heavy British batteries. A successful advance was made and the number of prisoners greatly increased. By the end of May, however, the Austrians received reinforcements from the Russian front, and counter-attacks were opened. Ground was lost in the south and about 14,000 Italians were captured. The Austrian counter-attack, however, failed in its object, in spite of the fact that an Italian brigade of fresh troops, suspected of pacifist leanings, failed to do what was expected of it. Part of it retreated and part surrendered.

The gap created caused other brigades to be surrounded and cut off.

During June, Italy achieved successes on the Trentino front, and, but for the disaffection of Russia, which permitted Austria to strengthen its forces in this, as in the Isonzo region, the regrettable incident on the Carso plateau would not have seriously affected General Cadorna's plans. It became evident, however, that Italy would require help in men as well as munitions to oppose Austria's growing strength.

In August the Italian offensive on the Isonzo front was renewed with vigour from Tolmino on the north of the Bainsizza plateau, southward to the shores of the Adriatic. The ground lost in the Carso was recovered, and a successful series of attacks were conducted between Tolmino and Amboro on the Bainsizza plateau. A gap was made in the Austrian line to the south of Amboro, and the dominating height of Monte Santo was captured on 24th August. This was a notable success. Monte Santo was a "key position", and the Italians hoped the possession of it would enable them to capture Monte Gabriele and force the Austrians to retreat along a wide front. The enemy, however, were able to rush forward reinforcements and prevent a break-through. In the south the battle-line swayed backward and forward. The Italians lost ground as a result of counter-attacks, but recovered it again. By the end of

September their offensive had come definitely to an end, and although they had captured large numbers of prisoners and much booty their objectives were not reached. Withal, their losses were heavy.

It was expected that both sides would settle down to desultory fighting during the winter, but the German High Command was stiffening the Austrian army with experienced storming troops and adding to its heavy artillery. A counter-offensive on a great scale was being planned, and it was hoped in Berlin that it would result in a military disaster for Italy on such a scale that its Government would be forced to sue for peace. General Mackensen was brought from the Eastern front to conduct the operations.

The autumn campaign had left Austria in a position to threaten the Tolmino bridge-head at the north of the Bainsizza plateau. An advance in this quarter would endanger the reserves at Gorizia and outflank the whole line southward to the sea. The salient formed by the capture of Monte Santo would then become a source of danger to the Italians, as withdrawal from it would be difficult and costly.

The Austro-German offensive was opened on the Upper Isonzo on the 24th October. It involved a 20-mile front from Plezzo to Tolmino. The whole of the western ridge of the Bainsizza plateau became "a landscape of flashes" as an

eye-witness has graphically put it, so numerous were the heavy guns accumulated by the enemy. A special gas, to which the Italians were not accustomed, was also brought into use. It was exceedingly pungent and produced sickness, and the Italian masks were not sufficient protection against it. In addition, the weather was bad. Rain fell heavily, and dense fogs collected along the banks of the River Isonzo. Mackensen directed his first blow between Tolmino and the Isonzo River villages of Santa Lucia and Santa Maria. The thrust was a powerful one. Advancing under cover of a thick mist, the German storming troops broke through the Italian advanced lines and compelled the defenders to fall back. "We were surrounded by mist," an Italian officer has related, "and suddenly the Germans came upon us from every side. Our men fought gallantly, but our army was soon in a muddle. The heavy mist prevented our artillery putting up a barrage to arrest the enemy's progress."

The Italian Second Army, which had suffered disastrous attacks, was forced to retreat. The rest of the line was being heavily bombarded. Gorizia was pounded so well that by 25th October it was a scene of ruin and desolation. Houses and churches collapsed; the roof of the Cathedral fell in. A screen of shells directed against the city made it untenable. Mackensen, having achieved a success in the Tolmino area,



developed a turning movement which forced General Cadorna to order a retreat from the Bainsizza plateau. The enemy advanced in force, carrying banners bearing the word "Peace". This appeal to the Italian soldiers was made in the belief that their *moral* had been seriously affected by the heavy losses sustained during the autumn offensive, and the German-inspired pacifist propaganda that had already borne fruit in June, especially on the Carso front. But although the enemy suggested "Peace", their artillery and machine-gun fire showed no signs of abatement, while both by day and night the airmen bombed cities and towns and villages behind the Italian lines.

The whole of the ground won by the Italians on the Bainsizza plateau was speedily abandoned, and the enemy claimed to have taken 30,000 prisoners and 300 guns. This was an exaggeration, but the losses were nevertheless heavy.

Gorizia fell on 29th October, and the Germans followed closely on the heels of the Second and Third Italian Armies retreating towards the west. The disaster was extending, and much alarm spread not only through Italy, but the Allied countries. On that evening, however, a reassuring announcement was made by General Smuts, who, addressing a public function in England, declared that Italy would be all right in the end. "Our sympathy", he said, "goes out

to her. This offensive will not help Germany to victory." His confidence was inspired by the knowledge that heavy British and French reinforcements were being sent to assist the Italians to maintain a strong front when they were able to extricate the armies from threatened disaster.

The Italian retreat on the Upper Isonzo was followed by the retreat of the Third Army from the Carso. By 31st October the enemy had occupied Udine, the old Italian head-quarters, and the Italian cavalry was doing its utmost to delay the advance of the enemy. On 1st November the Italians were making a stand on the line of the River Tagliamento, 30 miles to the west of Gorizia, and 15 miles from Udine. All the British guns had been saved. The Italian troops were cheerful, good tempered, and not lacking in confidence that the enemy would be checkmated, even though there were signs that sections were prone to be influenced by pacifist propaganda. A startling surrender had occurred on the lower reaches of the River Isonzo. About 60,000 Italians, having been isolated, had laid down their arms. The Germans exaggerated the disaster, and claimed that from the opening of the offensive on 24th October, until 2nd November, no fewer than 180,000 Italians had surrendered.

The Italians were not able to stand long on the Tagliamento line. Enemy artillery was

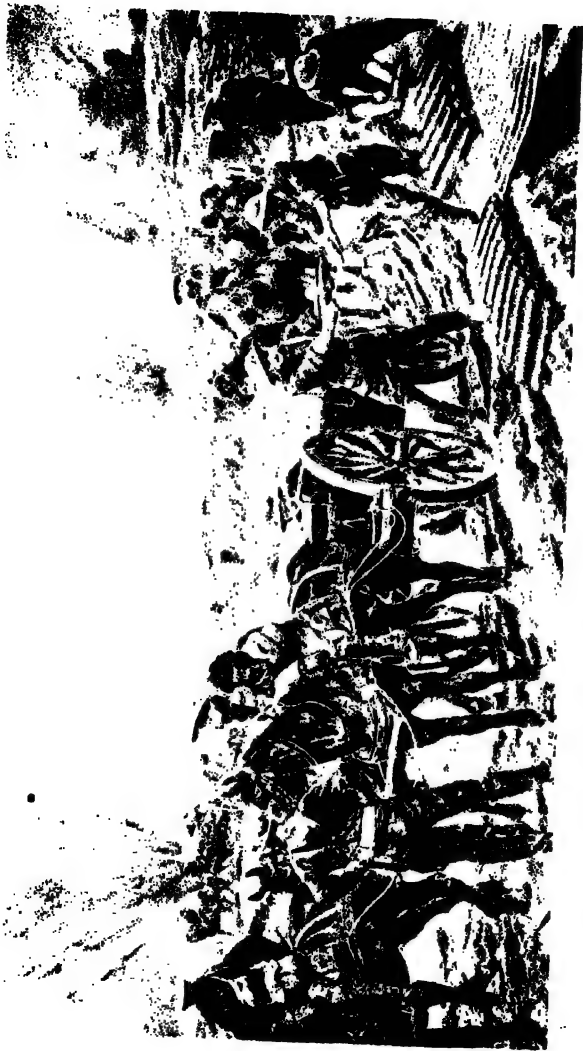
brought forward rapidly and the river was crossed at various points. A further retreat of the main Italian armies had to be effected, so that they might take up positions where they could be reorganized. General Cadorna hoped to make a firm stand on the lines of the Livenza and Piave. The withdrawal was an orderly one, but it necessitated a retreat on the northern front; also, Germany was, by this time, confident that Italy was thoroughly defeated. The Kaiser telegraphed to the Sultan of Turkey: "May our armies soon bring peace—our only aim in this righteous fight". King Ferdinand of Bulgaria was already an interested spectator on the Austro-German front. He was credited with the hope of entering Rome with the Kaiser by Christmas.

The Italians were by 8th November compelled to withdraw from the Livenza line. The river was low and the Austro-German forces experienced no great difficulty in crossing it. Heavy rear-guard fighting by the Italian armies delayed the enemy advance however. By 12th November, the Austro-German and Italian armies were facing one another, on a 30-mile front, on the line of the River Piave, the bridges across which had been destroyed. The enemy's preliminary attacks were held. Meanwhile the Italian retreat from the Alpine positions of Carnia and Cadore was being conducted in safety and with success.



## THE ENEMY'S NEW DEFENCE SYSTEM IN 1917

Attacking line of the German concrete pillboxes and machine gun emplacements.



FEEDING THE TRENCHES IN ACTION DURING THE BRITISH ADVANCE  
TOWARDS LANSCHUTZ, 1918

The Austro-Germans were conducting a movement to outflank the Italian armies on the wings. On the left they were advancing across the plateau of the Seven Communes to menace the Piave defensive line and force a further retreat. But Italy's resistance was too strong for them. On the right wing the enemy had crossed a portion of the Piave and were slowly creeping through the marshy area north of Venice, between the Piave and Vecchia Piave, but they were being held. By the middle of November the Italians were counter-attacking in this region. The weather was growing cold and snow fell, but in this battle for Venice the Italians displayed great heart and determination. Meanwhile incessant assaults were being delivered in the Trentino. The Italian fighting spirit had, however, been revived, and in the north and on the Piave line the enemy were being constantly thwarted. On the coast British monitors were co-operating with Italian warships in shelling the enemy. By the beginning of December it was generally recognized that Venice was safe.

A new Austro-German effort on the Asiago plateau involved heavy fighting, but the Italian line could not be broken. Another fresh thrust was made during Christmas week, but it was beaten back. By the end of the year the Italians were in possession of the defensive lines in the Grappa and Asiago sectors which

had been so seriously threatened. Further, British and French reinforcements had been placed at their disposal and had done much service. Before the month of November the Austro-Germans found themselves opposed not only by the Italian greys, but by the French blues, and the British khakies. At the close of the year the Allied troops knew that the worst was over and were confident that success would be theirs in 1918.

## CHAPTER XXV

### Autumn Successes on Western Front

The French won two important successes in the autumn of 1917. At Verdun they waged what is known as the Fourth Battle, which resulted in the Germans being driven back on a great portion of the line to the positions they occupied when they began the offensive of 1916. This success was made possible by excellent air-craft and artillery work. The vulnerable parts of the strong German positions were searched out and so severely pounded by heavy guns that a strong infantry advance, which began on 20th August on a misty morning, resulted in important gains being made and in the capture of over 11,000 prisoners. Furious German counter-attacks made in the latter part of September and early in October failed to achieve the results desired by the enemy, and the German commander was superseded.

Another French offensive was conducted on the western spurs of the Chemin-des-Dames



in October. It is known as the Battle for Malmaison. The fort of that name was captured, and the Germans were cleared from the plateau with the loss of about 11,000 prisoners. It was not until the spring that the importance of this success was generally recognized. The French victory on the Chemin-des-Dames then broke up the German offensive into detached efforts, and prevented their sweeping forward *en masse* to separate the French and British armies as they attempted to do when they made the thrust towards Amiens. But for the fact that the need of Italy was so great, and British and French forces had to be withdrawn so as to hold back the Austro-German armies on the Upper Piave, the French might have followed up their victory on the Chemin-des-Dames and achieved further success.

Heavy and continuous fighting took place on the Flanders Ridges during the late summer and autumn of 1917. The British troops had to contend, not only against a stubborn and determined enemy, but were faced with enormous difficulties caused by persistently rainy weather. Battles were fought among the terrible swamps of Flanders, through which heavy guns were moved with great difficulty, and transport problems were ever great and exhausting. The Germans adopted a new defensive system by erecting strong concrete forts which the British soldiers nicknamed "pill

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boxes". These were so arranged that they supported one another with enfilade fire. Being low, and in places well concealed, they could not be destroyed except by direct artillery fire. Infantry advancing against them had to struggle through swamps, and through screens of machine-gun bullets. British attacks in the "pill-box" area were facilitated by a system of artillery barrages, and were conducted with success.

A series of important advances took place on the Flanders Ridges from 30th July till the end of November. The enemy were thrown back beyond Langemarck, on a wide front, in September, and by the beginning of October the salient formed extended past Poelcapelle. The salient protecting Ypres was considerably widened towards the end of November, when Passchendael village was captured.

In October the British War Cabinet sent a special message to the Commander-in-Chief, in which the troops engaged in the heavy fighting were warmly congratulated. "Starting from positions in which every advantage rested with the enemy," so ran the message, "and, hampered and delayed from time to time by most unfavourable weather, you and your men have, nevertheless, continuously driven the enemy back with such skill, courage, and pertinacity, as have commanded the grateful admiration of the peoples of the British Empire,

and filled the enemy with alarm." Haig, in reply, informed the War Cabinet that "all ranks are determined to achieve victory and feel confident of doing so".

It was after the exchange of these messages that the Battle of Passchendael was fought. The advance achieved was an important one, the captured village being a strong, fortified position on the ridge. The battle also gave indirect help to Italy by preventing the Germans from sending further reinforcements to strengthen the Austro-German push on the Piave front. The offensive waged since the end of July had been a costly one for the enemy. Over 24,000 prisoners had been captured, and their other losses greatly exceeded those of the British. "Most important of all," Haig commented in his dispatch, "our new and hastily trained armies have shown once again that they are capable of meeting and beating the enemy's best troops, even under conditions which favoured his defence to a degree, and which it required the greatest endurance, determination, and heroism to overcome." The offensive begun at Arras in the spring had been carried on continuously until the end of November. No fewer than 131 German divisions had been engaged and beaten by about half that number of British divisions. The prisoners taken in this eight months' offensive numbered about 58,000. But for the successes won in 1917 by the

British at Arras, Vimy, Messines, and in Flanders, and by the French in the south, the German offensive of the following spring would have been of more serious character than it proved to be.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### Cambrai Thrust and the "Clump Fight"

The collapse of Russian resistance on the Eastern front permitted the Germans to transfer to the Western front considerable forces to oppose the British attacks in Flanders and those of the French in the Rheims area. Other sectors were left comparatively weak, and one of these included the Cambrai front. In November, Sir Douglas Haig planned a surprise attack in this quarter. The chief element in the surprise was the employment of large numbers of tanks to break through the German defences instead of the customary preliminary bombardment for their destruction. The enemy had laid out great masses of barbed-wire entanglements, which would have required many days of concentrated shell-fire to clear, but if a sufficient number of tanks were sent forward it was considered that they would make broad breaches through which the infantry could advance speedily, protected by artillery barrages. If this plan could be accomplished, it was in-

tended to employ cavalry in strong force so as to cut the enemy's communications.

The preliminary preparations were made without arousing the suspicions of the Germans. Their airmen could not detect the usual preparations for an offensive, and an attack in force was not therefore expected. The advance, which began before dawn on 20th November, came to the enemy as a complete surprise. It was confined to a 6-mile front, but seemed to be on a wider one, for all along the British line south of the Scarpe great clouds of gas and smoke were released and the heavy guns thundered in chorus. The tanks were hidden by a smoke barrage which darkened the morning air as they plodded through thick masses of barbed wire and flattened out machine-gun posts, causing many Germans to take flight. Behind the tanks came the British infantry, while the artillery pounded the enemy's support trenches so as to hamper the bringing forward of reinforcements. The German artillery positions were also concentrated upon, and the fire of their big guns was greatly weakened. On went the tanks, swinging astride the German trenches, and raking these with their guns. The first intimation that an attack was in progress came to many of the defenders when they caught sight of a tank lumbering up with its guns in action. All the first system of the Hindenburg defences, as they were called, were taken, and

then the attack was pressed home against the reserve line. Large numbers of British aeroplanes came over as the day brightened and, flying low, turned their machine-guns on the defenders. A strong resistance was set up at Lateau Wood, which was strongly defended by artillery and machine-guns. Here the Germans made a determined stand. But the tanks went forward in force and after a desperate struggle the position was taken before an enemy gun could be withdrawn. Heavy fighting took place on left and right, and strongly defended positions were taken, including hill slopes and mounds, riddled by tunnels and bristling with machine-gun positions. Tanks and infantry went forward until the Canal de l'Escaut was reached. One of the bridges was captured just as the Germans were preparing to blow it up. At other points difficulties of a serious kind were encountered. A main road bridge, for instance, had been partly destroyed, and, when a tank attempted to cross it, collapsed. The tank was wrecked. Other tanks were put out of action by direct hits from German guns.

The success of the initial attack was not only a surprise for the Germans. It was greater than the British Command expected. The tanks had done wonders, but the cavalry was not ready to follow them up. When a large enough force of mounted men were got together, the chance of effecting a great break-through had passed.

It was not until the afternoon that the British cavalry went forward. The infantry had advanced somewhat impetuously at certain points. They did not wait even for the tanks, and were held up sufficiently long in village fighting to permit the Germans rallying and reoccupying entrenched positions which they had vacated. The consequence was that the cavalry were prevented from breaking through. One squadron of Canadian cavalry, however, got across the canal, a temporary bridge having been smartly constructed by Ulstermen, and, racing through German entrenchments, scattered a considerable number of German infantry and captured a whole German battery of artillery. Machine-gun fire was turned upon this daring force by the enemy and the horses suffered heavily. When the Canadians returned in the dusk of evening, with the prisoners they had taken, they had few horses left.

The surprise attack was a remarkable success. Three elaborate systems of defence had been broken through to a depth of nearly 5 miles and about 5000 prisoners had been captured. Had the main force of cavalry not been held up, the victory would have had more permanent results than proved to be the case.

The fighting went on during the night, and a further advance was achieved in the morning. But although the canal was crossed, the heavy machine-gun fire of the enemy, now recovered



from the surprise, retarded the advance and made captured ground difficult to hold. German reinforcements were being hurried into the battle area, for the Cambrai railway had not been cut. Our men were somewhat exhausted at the close of the second day's operations. The ground captured had to be consolidated and further advances were necessary. For several days the fighting continued with success for the British forces, until, on the left, Bourlon Wood, a strongly-defended position, was captured, and the salient formed by the British advance bulged out across the canal to the outskirts of Cambrai, which was a point of great strategic importance to the Germans.

Meanwhile, the enemy was preparing a strong counter-attack. It, too, was to have the element of surprise, for it was decided that it should take place without preliminary bombardment. The morning chosen for the attack was that of 30th November, which broke dimly, with veils of heavy mist, through which the advancing enemy sent quantities of smoke shell. Large forces were employed, and pressed forward regardless of loss. A breakthrough was effected at the northern end of Bonavis Ridge and the Gonnelleu sector, where the masses of Germans overwhelmed the defence by sheer surprise tactics. They reached the British guns before the artillerymen were aware that an attack was in progress. In the

northern part of the salient the enemy's attack was met with stern resistance, but on the south it was successful. The Germans made a breach and poured through it in force, spreading out like a fan, and moving quickly. All resistance was brushed aside, and they advanced to a depth of about three miles. The situation was a serious one. It might well have led to a great disaster. But an unexpected resistance was met with. A labour battalion and sappers, who were at work behind the British lines, were astonished to see the Germans advancing towards them. Soldiers playing at football were similarly amazed. Then began one of the most wonderful conflicts in the annals of the war. The labourers, sappers, and soldiers began to fight, using any weapons they could lay hands on to stay the German advance. Shovels, pikes, poles, and pieces of piping and other improvised weapons were used against German bayonets. "I saw one big navy", relates an eye-witness, "attacking the enemy with a post, which he used as a club. He had four down in a matter of seconds. I saw him putting a dozen Germans to flight. It seemed like a glimpse of prehistoric warfare. I ascertained afterwards that he escaped with a bruise, which he got from the butt of a German rifle. Another man — an American, I think — peppered the enemy with big stones (they were as big as his head), and he, too, escaped after accounting

for his portion. A third fellow—a sapper—wielded a shovel like a battle-axe; and I saw a fourth felling Germans with his fists. Soldiers in football-field attire used bayonets with effect.”

The “clump fight”, as an Irish navy called it, had the desired effect. These labour men and sappers delayed the German advance long enough for the Guards Division, which came from another part of the salient, to counter-attack. Then the Bengal Lancers swept through the enemy. “It was a fine spectacle”, says an eye-witness, “to see them sweeping down with fluttering pennons. The Germans yelled and scampered as they scattered them, laying many low. But, although the Guards and the Indian cavalry hurled the enemy back, it was really the fighting men among the sappers and the navvies who, by setting up so gallant a resistance, made it possible for them to achieve so fine a success.”

Great gallantry was displayed at various points of the ruptured line, for the fighting men were determined to “stick it”. Isolated parties of British troops fought with determination that could not be broken. In Bourlon Wood a company held out for two days, until they were relieved, against tremendous odds. Another company, which had been isolated in a trench between Mœuvres and the Canal du Nord, fought until their ammunition ran out and the last man fell. The main Ger-

man attacks were met with determined resistance. In some parts from five to ten attacks, delivered by massed troops, were beaten back on the first day with heavy losses. Ultimately a withdrawal became necessary, especially from ground rendered untenable by the preliminary successes achieved by the Germans, and it was gradually and successfully carried out. But the enemy were unable to break through at any other point. Bourlon Wood, which had been filled with gas from German gas shells, had to be evacuated, as was also the ground north of Flesquières Ridge. By the 7th December the British position was consolidated. The salient had been reduced by about half, but important portions of the Hindenburg defences remained in British hands. About 11,000 German prisoners and 145 German guns had been taken, which more than counterbalanced the British losses. The Battle of Cambrai was the last important action of the year. In some respects it was the most remarkable one, and important lessons were learned from it.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### Russia's Last Effort

Russia's last military effort against the Austro-German armies was made in Galicia. In June, the Coalition Government and Kerensky held sway at Petrograd, and it was believed that an offensive, limited although this one was, would restore discipline in the Russian army, which had been weakened by revolutionary propaganda. The Allies had supplied artillery, machine-guns, trench-mortars, and shells, and British armoured-car squadrons. The offensive was opened at the beginning of July. Successes were achieved and thousands of prisoners were taken, but the Bolshevik pacifists were busy, and the northern section grew unstable, although victory was within the grasp of the attackers. Orders were disobeyed; whole battalions refused to fight. In the south Korniloff's army swept all before him and made a wide breach in the enemy lines, taking 12,000 prisoners. But Bolshevik propaganda crippled Korniloff's efforts, and the Russians began to leave their positions "voluntarily", allowing

the enemy to occupy them. As a result of many acts of treachery the Russian front became disorganized, and panic spread from regiment to regiment. A breach of twenty miles in the north was caused by the voluntary retirement of Russian regiments, and the whole front had to fall back. Complete disaster was avoided by the energetic General Korniloff, who was supported by General Brussiloff in drastic measures for the restoration of discipline. Roumania was ready to co-operate with Russia, but was betrayed by the revolutionaries, who brought about the military collapse of her great ally. Russia began to break up into provinces. By November, Kerensky's dictatorship had come to an end, and Lenin and Trotsky, as Bolshevik dictators, opened negotiations with Germany at Brest-Litovsk. The Germans had already penetrated deeply into Russia, and demanded the permanent occupation of Lithuania and Courland and the control of a large portion of Western Russia between Odessa on the Black Sea and Narva on the Gulf of Finland.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Germany's Spring Offensive

During the winter of 1917-18 the German war lords rushed westward almost all their divisions that had been engaged fighting against Russia. They were determined that a decision should be reached, and, like gamblers, they staked everything on "the last throw", in the hope that, having broken the Allied line on the Western front, they would force Britain and France to sue for peace. It was evident that they felt no time was to be lost, for the Americans were coming across the Atlantic in ever-increasing numbers.

In March the Germans struck the first great blow in the Somme valley. It seemed surprising to the average soldier that, after desolating that region, they should show such anxiety to reconquer it, and involve themselves in the difficulties of getting men, guns, and transport over that area of ruined roads and shell-holes. But the German aim was to drive a wedge between the French and British armies and then deal with them in detail. The immediate

objective of the enemy was Amiens. If this town were taken, the British army would be placed in a position of peril. The occupation of Amiens would cut the communications between the British and French armies, because it was an important railway junction on the route from Paris to the coast. A retirement from the line held by the British would be a difficult and delicate operation. It could not be otherwise than disorderly, because it would be impossible to have a great army embarked quickly—and embarked for the home country it would have to be. Besides, the northern part of the line would have to be withdrawn, and Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne given over to the Germans to be used as bases for attacks by submarine, aeroplane, and Zeppelin.

The French army was also threatened by great peril. If Amiens was captured and the British army thrown into confusion, the Germans would make a speedy advance against Paris, which would fall like ripe fruit into their hands. The rest can be imagined. Germany would win the war and dictate terms of peace as a conqueror.

It was in the latter days of March that the storm burst suddenly on the Western front. The first German attack was made against the British front in front of Arras from La Fère to Monchy. This part of the line was lightly held, although an attack was anticipated. The



Fifth Army, under General Gough, had to meet a blow from vastly superior numbers, and to depend to a great extent on the difficulties the enemy would be involved in by entering marshy country. But the weather was exceptionally dry, and the marshes did not prove the obstacle they were believed to be.

The British left at Arras stood firm against a tremendous bombardment and the onrush of dense masses of troops, but the right, between La Fère and St. Quentin, gave way and a gap was created. The Germans claimed to have captured thousands of prisoners and hundreds of guns. As usual, the numbers were exaggerated, but the reverse sustained by the British was serious enough. Its seriousness was not at first realized by the British public.

The German storming troops had been trained during the winter for this offensive, and developed extraordinary rapidity of movement. In the past a rupture such as was effected would have been followed by a sufficient interval of desultory fighting to permit of the gap being closed. The Germans, however, were able to follow up their success without delay and force a retreat over a wide front. Not only was the attack well organized, it was conceived on a big and simple scale. The Germans had arranged to deal a series of staggering blows, so as to prevent a rally on

the part of the defenders, and once a retreat began to force it to continue. No time was to be given to the British to reorganize their ruptured line.

A rapid retreat from the Somme valley became a necessity. The lines before Cambrai had to be abandoned. Peronne was captured, and it was followed by an attack which gave the Germans Bapaume. The British troops had to fall back 15 miles from St. Quentin to prevent the line breaking.

Over a million Germans were thrown into the great battle, and although our men fought with great valour and determination they were at vital points hopelessly outnumbered. A retreat similar to that from Mons in 1914 had to be conducted. Once again the Germans were endeavouring to "roll up" the British line. But once again their calculations were upset by the stubbornness of the defenders.

Soon after Bapaume fell the Germans were back on their old front, which had been ruptured when the Somme valley offensive began in 1916. But they did not rest there. Their objective was Amiens, as has been stated. If they could reach it in time, they would have the British and French armies at their mercy.

In the Somme valley, however, the Germans found that the difficulties of transport were greater than they had calculated upon. They had to lay light railways, and did so with re-

markable speed. But in the new "war of movement" they required more motor vehicles than they could concentrate. The British blockade had caused a rubber famine in Germany. Consequently in the struggle which ensued the British navy can claim to have exercised an influence.

Although the enemy were achieving spectacular successes, however, the real struggle was yet in front of them. By retiring before heavy massed attacks, the British were conserving their strength—tempting the enemy to exhaust the force of his blow. The German war lords gambled on achieving a rapid and complete success. They were taking serious risks. If they did not reach their objectives, they were really running headlong towards ultimate disaster. The possession of the large area they had wrested from the British was of no value to them if it were not to be used to obtain what they required. If the French and British armies could not be separated, if the British were not forced to fall back from the Amiens-Paris line, if the coast towns were not conquered and Paris was kept secure from their grasp, their initial victories were to be defeats in disguise. Nothing could justify the risks taken by the war lords except ultimate and complete success. The war could not be allowed to continue beyond the winter of 1918. In 1919 the American army would be very large,

and the Allies would then have an overwhelming advantage in numbers. Moreover, the winter of 1918-19 was likely to be a desperate one for the German towns, which were to be subjected, it was feared at Berlin, to constant and disastrous air attacks. Even Berlin itself might have to suffer.

Once they had adopted the offensive, the Germans knew full well that it was absolutely necessary for them to continue it until the end was reached. No time could be lost. Every objective in the plan of campaign must be reached according to their time-table. Every delay experienced was perilous. No sacrifice was considered too great to achieve the victory they desired and required.

Following up their successful attack on the Fifth British Army, which began on 21st March, the Germans brought fresh divisions into the conflict, and developed a rapid advance to the south of Albert. The railway line from Amiens to Soissons was cut at Montdidier. The railway line behind it, from Amiens to Paris, was then seriously threatened. But, happily, the enemy was unable to make further progress in this direction, the French resistance being finely maintained.

The chief danger zone at the time was in front of Amiens. On Monday, 25th March, the situation here was exceedingly grave, but the threatened peril was overcome by the heroic

resistance shown by the British troops. One of the chief causes of the German failure was the strong and stubborn defence of Arras. The right wing of the German army suddenly developed a strong offensive against this town and Vimy Ridge, but was repulsed with heavy loss. A notable part was taken in the defence by Scottish troops.

The direct blow against Amiens was parried by a scratch division which defended for six days the Amiens-Chaulnes railway. It was made up of quite a variety of units, including labourers, engineers, balloon detachments, and Lewis-gun crews. Highly-trained troops were also present.

Meanwhile the British reserves were being hurried forward. At one point, in the vital area between the Ancre and the Somme, Australian troops came into position just as the Germans were advancing in force to attack important ground. The British artillery had not yet been got up, but the Australians fought with characteristic skill and determination, and threw back the attackers with rifle and machine-gun fire. Opposite Albert the situation was a grave one, but here too the Germans were fought to a standstill. English and Scottish divisions achieved great glory by their steadfast stand.

A critical week went past, and in the end the Germans were firmly held. The last attempt to break through north of the Somme

was made on the 5th of April. Furious attacks were conducted against the high-ground British positions to the west of Albert, so as to open the way to Amiens. But the Australians in this quarter broke the repeated waves of assault, and the Germans had to abandon their attempts.

A final and desperate endeavour to break *through was made to the south of the Somme*, three weeks later. A footing was gained on Hill 104, and the town of Villers-Bretonneux was captured. Again the situation grew grave, but a magnificent attack was made by Australian reserves, which were rushed to the danger point, and the town was retaken. No doubt could remain, after this brilliant action was fought, that Amiens was safe and secure.

Meanwhile the situation in the north had grown critical. The Germans were endeavouring to rupture the British lines so as to reach the Channel ports, and it was essential that their progress should be severely restricted. Haig issued, on 13th April, a grave and stirring order in which he said: "Every position must be held to the last man. There must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind depend alike upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical hour."

The new blow was struck on 9th April, between the La Bassée Canal and the neighbourhood of Armentières, a sector which was held by British and Portuguese troops. A heavy and prolonged bombardment was followed by massed attacks in a fog. The Portuguese were demoralized and their front was shattered. Their somewhat precipitate retreat compelled the British troops associated with them to fall back, with the result that the Germans forced their way into the Allies' positions in the triangle formed by the Rivers Lys and Loire. But although the centre broke, the flanks at Givenchy, on the south, and Fleurbaix, on the north, made magnificent stands. On the following day the Germans renewed their assaults. Ground was lost between Estaires and Steenwerck and in the neighbourhood of Ploegsteert Wood. The town of Armentières, which had been wrecked by shell-fire and was full of gas, had to be evacuated. But a magnificent defence at the really vital points had been set up. A particularly notable stand was made by the 51st Division of Highland Territorials in the River Loire area. Fresh German divisions delivered continued assaults, but were worsted on each occasion. Haig, in his report, wrote: "In this fighting the 51st Division has beaten off incessant attacks with great loss to the enemy, and by vigorous and successful counter-attacks has recaptured positions into

which the enemy had forced his way". The Germans attempted to achieve successes farther north, in the neighbourhood of Wytschaete and Hollebeke, but, as Haig reported, "were completely repulsed by the 9th Division with great loss to the enemy".

This northern attack was the enemy's last effort to force the Allies out of the Ypres salient. But the defence on Kemmel Ridge held firm, and the push to the south of it, which became known as the Battle of Armentières, was eventually restricted after Wytschaete and Bailleul had been taken. The tide of battle had turned by the 18th April, when the German attacks on a 10-mile front between Givenchy and the River Lys, east of St. Venant, were beaten back with extremely heavy losses. British counter-attacks were successfully delivered.

On 25th April, however, the Germans renewed their offensive on the Bailleul-Hollebeke front, and captured Kemmel Hill. It seemed as if Ypres had been rendered untenable, but the enemy was again held and made to suffer heavily. French reinforcements which had been sent northward fought with great valour and counter-attacked in dashing style. Ypres was saved, as Amiens had been, and the Germans, not having been able to achieve what they had set out to do, were baffled and seriously crippled. Partial gains were no



good to them. Their reckless assaults could only be justified by complete success, and this they failed to achieve. "If we hold," Mr. Churchill declared early in May, "we shall win." We held and we won.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### Foch in Supreme Command

When the situation was in its darkest stage it was wisely decided to appoint to the supreme command of the Allied armies the brilliant French strategist, General Foch. The appointment was announced three days after Haig had issued his famous "back-to-the-wall" order.

General Foch had long been known in his native land as a learned student of military science. He came into prominence in the field as an army commander at the First Battle of the Marne, where he achieved a success that did much to thwart the German plan of campaign, forcing the enemy to fall back on the Aisne. When the British army was sent north to the Ypres area, General Foch was ordered to Cassel to command the French, and in October and November he co-operated with General French and helped him to hold back the Germans, who were struggling to force the British to abandon Ypres, so that they might

win possession of the Channel ports. As Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies, General Foch in the spring of 1918 faced the new situation with characteristic courage and confidence, and began to lay his plans for out-generalling the enemy. He could depend on the armies under his command to do all that he would ask of them, for their *moral* was high. Signs were not wanting, on the other hand, that the Germans had already grown "war-weary", and that discipline could only be maintained by the achievement of successes. Even during the spring offensive, as General Ludendorff has since confessed, there were indications that the *moral* of the German troops was in a state of decay. One or two divisions had failed to reach objectives that seemed within their grasp. The resistance set up by both the British and French, and the fighting qualities of the fresh American troops, caused large masses of German soldiers to realize that they would never be able to destroy the Allied power of defence. When the soldier is in doubt, the general plans in vain.

After Foch's appointment, the Allied front was rearranged. French reserves were sent to assist in the defence of the Ypres salient. The point of junction of the British and French armies was changed to the south of Villers-Bretonneux, with an Australian corps placed in contact with the French. This was

a place of honour which the Australians richly deserved.

An important decision was taken during this critical period by the American Government. It consented to the American battalions being used to reinforce British and French divisions that had suffered heavily. Although this involved the breaking up of American divisions, the sacrifice was readily and loyally made, and did much to strengthen the Allied defence during the grave period of the great German offensives in the northern part of the Western front.

Britain, too, made a great sacrifice. When our need for reinforcements became urgent, the decision had to be taken to send to France our last reserves, composed of lads between eighteen and nineteen years of age. When war had been declared, these gallant young sons of England and Scotland were schoolboys, who watched with interest the drilling of citizen soldiers, little dreaming that their turn was coming to be sent to France to strengthen the thinned ranks of the war-hardened fighting men. "Glad we were to see them", an officer has written. "They were worthy of our traditions, and fought like men."

In time, when the German offensive on the Marne threatened Paris and the outlook seemed black, the four British divisions which were sent south to assist in shattering the German

attack were largely reinforced by the British youths. They helped to turn the tide of the war, and to ensure ultimate victory for the Allied cause.



### A ZEPPELIN'S CLIMB WHEN ATTACKED

One of the raiding airships shooting up into the sky on being discovered by search lights and fired on.



### A DUEL IN THE AIR

This illustration is a reproduction of an attached enlargement of a photograph taken by a French aviator from an aeroplane below the German machines. A French biplane is seen to the left in pursuit of the German.

## CHAPTER XXX

### Stirring Naval Adventures

When the German spring offensive was at its height, incessant air-raids were made on London. The U-boat campaign was also being conducted with vigour, but it failed to prevent the landing in France of large contingents of American troops. Indeed, the U-boat operations were a failure in the sense that the German offensives towards Amiens and Ypres were failures. The Germans had hoped to gain a great military advantage by waging their unrestricted submarine campaign, and had risked bringing America into the war. They did not gain the advantage. Instead, they were faced by the serious increase of manpower in the Allied cause.

In the early morning of 23rd April, a gallant attack was made by the British on the German submarine bases at Zeebrugge and Ostend. Six obsolete cruisers took part in the raid. Five of them were filled with concrete, for the purpose of being sunk in the channels and at the entrances of the two ports. The sixth



cruiser, the *Vindictive*, was fitted with specially constructed bows for landing storming-parties, and was armed with batteries, mortars, flame-throwers, &c.

Light covering forces of destroyers, motor-boats, and other small craft accompanied the cruisers, while a force of monitors, with 15-inch guns, was also in attendance. Provision was made to spread curtains of smoke across the sea so as to conceal the strength of the force and deceive the enemy.

The plan arranged for the Zeebrugge attack was to open a bombardment by monitors, while the *Vindictive*, accompanied by destroyers, ran towards the Mole, with their guns ablaze, so as to land storming-parties. Three of the old cruisers were in the meantime to enter the canal to be run aground or sunk. Old submarines, filled with explosives, were detailed to collide with the pilework of the Mole, so that it might be severed from the shore.

The Ostend attack was of less complicated character. Two cruisers were to be run ashore and blown up so as to block the channel. This operation was only partially successful, for, though the block-vessels were sunk in the channel, the fairway was not closed. It was, however, restricted.

At Zeebrugge the attack was attended by more satisfactory results. One of the submarines which was blown up damaged the

Mole considerably. The landing-party on the Mole diverted the attention of the Germans from the chief intention of the British expedition, which was to run in the block-ships. These were successfully sunk according to plan.

The flotilla approached Zeebrugge behind a great smoke screen, but when close to the Mole the wind changed, and the Germans beheld the great swarm of craft, large and small, that had come against them. A furious fire was opened from the shore batteries, and when the *Vindictive* reached the Mole and dropped anchor she was hammered by shells. The landing was, however, effected by the gallant naval men, although their casualties were heavy before they left the *Vindictive* and its attending vessels. Except from shell-fire, however, the demolition-party met with little resistance. They set fire to the various buildings, and performed their other duties with coolness and dispatch.

Meanwhile the vessels filled with concrete were being run in under heavy fire. The destroyers engaged kept up a fusillade until they had secured the men engaged in the blocking operations.

Acroplane squadrons subsequently bombarded the German works at Zeebrugge and Ostend.

On the Thursday night of 9th May another attempt was made to block Ostend channel. The *Vindictive*, which had figured so pro-

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minently at Zeebrugge, was filled with concrete and conveyed to Ostend, where she was sunk at the harbour entrance.

A naval air force first delivered a vigorous bombing attack, causing fires and much damage. While this operation was in progress, the *Vindictive* was run in under a terrific fire from the German guns. Much difficulty was experienced in finding the harbour entrance owing to a sea fog having obscured all landmarks. The enemy's search-lights and star shells gave their gunners sufficient visibility to pick out the *Vindictive* and the destroyers accompanying her. For about twenty minutes the old cruiser was in sight moving up and down in search of the harbour entrance. She was hit time and again.

Not until 2.20 a.m. were the piers sighted. Then the cruiser was swung round until her stern collided with the eastern pier. An attempt was made to get her to lie right across the channel, but the vessel had grounded aft and could not be brought into better position. She was accordingly blown up, the officer who lit the charge making a hurried but safe escape. It was afterwards ascertained that the *Vindictive* was submerged at an angle of 40 degrees at the eastern entrance to the pier and that her stern was against the pier.

Two motor-launches took off the *Vindictive's* crew under heavy fire. Although the harbour

was not completely blocked, it was rendered useless to any but small craft.

The British aerial attacks on Ostend and Zeebrugge were continued on subsequent dates. Several enemy machines were met and destroyed. Bombing attacks were also made on the German docks at Bruges.

Meanwhile the attacks on German submarines on the high seas and round the British coast were being conducted with much success. In one week alone, when the American troops were crossing the Atlantic in British transports at the rate of 50,000 a week, five German U-boats, including two of the newest ones of improved type, were destroyed. The submarines were being sunk at a faster rate than the Germans could build new ones.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### “Paris? Never”

When the battle for Amiens was in progress, the Germans began to shell Paris with a great gun they had placed in position in a forest near Barisis. The distance travelled by its shell was about seventy miles. No military advantage was gained by this impressive weapon. It, however, heartened the German public, who had something to boast about, and it surprised the world. Withal, it announced, as boastfully as a declaration from the Kaiser, the objective of the German offensive. “Our shells”, declared a captive German officer, “are falling in Paris; they are clearing the way for the entry of our troops.”

This theatrical display—for it was in reality little more than that—was maintained after the spring offensives in the north had definitely failed. It was continued during the lull that ensued along the whole Western front. This lull continued during the month of May. It seemed, at the time, like a breathing space.

Both sides had been temporarily exhausted by their great efforts, and although the artillery was active, and air-raids frequent, no big military movements took place. Germany had still the power to take the offensive, her reserves being greater than those of the Allies, and the only question that arose was where the next blow was to be struck. There could be no doubt as to the objective. The long-range gun seemed to echo, "Paris! Paris! Paris!" from day to day.

One thing seemed certain during the May hush. Germany would have to strike soon or her last opportunity would pass away. Her time was running short. Every week thousands of American soldiers were arriving in France, and Foch had time on his side. His forces were growing stronger and, if the enemy could be held, no doubt remained as to which side would achieve ultimate victory. In the north the Allied lines were growing stronger. Another offensive in that area was being awaited with confidence.

The Germans, however, had given up hope of striking again where they had previously failed. They decided to open an offensive on the Chemin-des-Dames and the Aisne, where the lines were weakly held by British and French troops that had been relieved after heavy fighting in the north, and were now supposed to be resting on quiet sectors.

The fighting in this area began on Monday, 27th May. It was preceded by a violent bombardment between the Forest of Pinon and Rheims. Overwhelming masses of German troops pressed forward regardless of loss, towards the valley of the Aisne, where they secured a footing on the first day. An advance of 6 miles on a 20-mile front was achieved in a matter of eight hours. This gain was increased by another advance of 5 miles south of the Aisne. Here the Germans reached the valley of the Vesle. The ridge of Chemin-des-Dames was captured in the rush.

On the following day the enemy were across the Vesle and in occupation of the plateau to the north of Soissons, which was heavily shelled as was also Rheims. Soissons had to be evacuated next evening after heavy street fighting. On the Allies' right, Rheims was seriously threatened, but the British troops defending its approaches fought with their usual stubbornness and valour.

Meanwhile the great gun kept pounding Paris, and the Kaiser telegraphed to his consort: "Wilhelm attacked the British and French on the Chemin-des-Dames and Fritz reached the Vesle. To-morrow we go farther. God has given us a brilliant victory and will help us still more."

But Foch rushed up his reserves and held

the enemy at Soissons, while the Franco-British forces on the Brouillet-Thillois front as well as north-west of Rheims set up an iron defence. The roads were crowded with French refugees, who were flying from the Soissons-Rheims battle front, having deserted their homes in towns and villages at a moment's notice.

The Germans, baffled before Rheims, kept up a constant pressure towards the Marne, until between Rheims and Noyon they had formed a great triangular salient. Once again they were, like gamblers, making a desperate throw in their attempt to effect a breach by cutting the Allied armies in two. On the last day of May they occupied a stretch of ten miles along the north bank of the Marne between Dormans on their left and Château Thierry on their right. Opposite Château Thierry they met a strong force of Americans which had come up to prevent their crossing the river. Fresh German reserves were brought up to widen the salient between Soissons and Château Thierry, but although some ground was gained the defence in this forest region round Villers Cotterets proved to be too strong for them.

A German officer who took part in the offensive tells that on 30th May, when the first rush across the Aisne and Vesle promised success, a French colonel was taken prisoner. His



captors were in high spirits, and told him that they would be in Paris next day. "No, no," he protested. "Paris? . . . Never! Think of 1914 and the Marne!"

The German officers laughed, but they soon began to realize that Paris was farther off than they had imagined, and that tremendous obstacles had to be overcome before it could be reached. At the part of the line where the French officer was seized the Marne is wide and deep. Its beautiful valley seemed peaceful and deserted by all save the farmers and vine-growers. No French soldiers were to be seen, but if a German raised his head above a trench, the bullets of invisible French snipers whistled through the air. The French artillery fire began to pound the German positions from long range, and continued through the night. It was found impossible to cross the river, which was over 200 feet wide and flowed swiftly. The regiment was accordingly removed to another point, at which, it was believed, a successful crossing could be made. But there, too, the French were active. Days of waiting went past until five weeks had elapsed. The Germans were by that time realizing that the drive to Paris was not to be as rapid as they had anticipated. One day the growing feeling of uneasiness was greatly increased by the report that American troops were in front of them and that their plans had been captured,

raiders having made prisoner an officer who had in his possession important maps which revealed the German plan of attack. Allied aeroplanes kept continual watch on every movement.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### The Last Battle of the Marne

The enemy were held by the 4th of June, when the first phase of the new offensive came to an end. Five days later a new phase developed on a front of over 20 miles between Montdidier and Noyon. It then became clear that the Germans were attempting to advance towards Paris by striking at it alternately from the north and south. A successful advance between Montdidier and Noyon would bring them to the River Oise, and force the Allies to fall back from the triangle formed by the Oise and the Aisne.

The situation was serious, but the German objective, which was Compiègne, could not be reached. A surprise French counter-attack on an 8-mile front threw the enemy back across the Matz and saved Compiègne. This brilliant little action was conducted by General Mangin, who was given a new command on the evening before.

At the time this action was regarded as of local importance only. It was said to be

“embarrassing to the Germans”. But it was more than that. Looking back now, Mangin’s success appears to mark a turning-point in the Great War. It arrested the dangerous advance of the enemy towards Paris from the north, and compelled him to make his final attempt on a comparatively narrow front in the Last Battle of the Marne.

The situation, however, still remained grave. Fresh German divisions were being brought up for the final struggle. Foch was also making his plans. He was preparing to strike, but the time was not ripe. If he had struck prematurely he would have exhausted his reserves and given the enemy an advantage. His policy was to hold firm, as Haig had done in the north, knowing well that sooner or later the impatient enemy would expend his reserves in a last desperate effort to reach Paris.

On 18th June the Germans attempted to widen the salient by capturing Rheims at all costs, but were completely baffled by the strong defence.

Then followed a month of preparation for the final onslaught, as the Germans intended it to be – the offensive which some imaginative writers in Germany referred to as “the Peace Procession to Paris”. A heavy blow was to be struck, and its seriousness was duly appreciated by the Allies. The best German storming-troops were concentrated; guns were being

brought forward in great numbers. The German infantrymen were greatly impressed by a display of tanks that were supposed to be superior to the British variety. Meanwhile, Foch was preparing for his strong counter-offensive, and the able generals under his command were maturing plans that were to surprise the enemy.

The first blow was struck on 15th July on an extensive front to the west and east of Rheims. A heavy bombardment was begun at midnight, but the French anticipated it, having learned of the German plan. General Gouraud, who commanded the Fourth French Army, "did the unexpected". He withdrew his main forces for about 2 miles along a front of 25 miles, leaving only machine-gun posts to meet the attacking masses of Germans and their tanks and field artillery. Across the deserted zone the enemy came in great numbers, expending the force of his blow like a boxer who strikes blindly at a shadow. The losses sustained by the Germans were heavy, and when the real defences were reached they were held up and thrown into confusion.

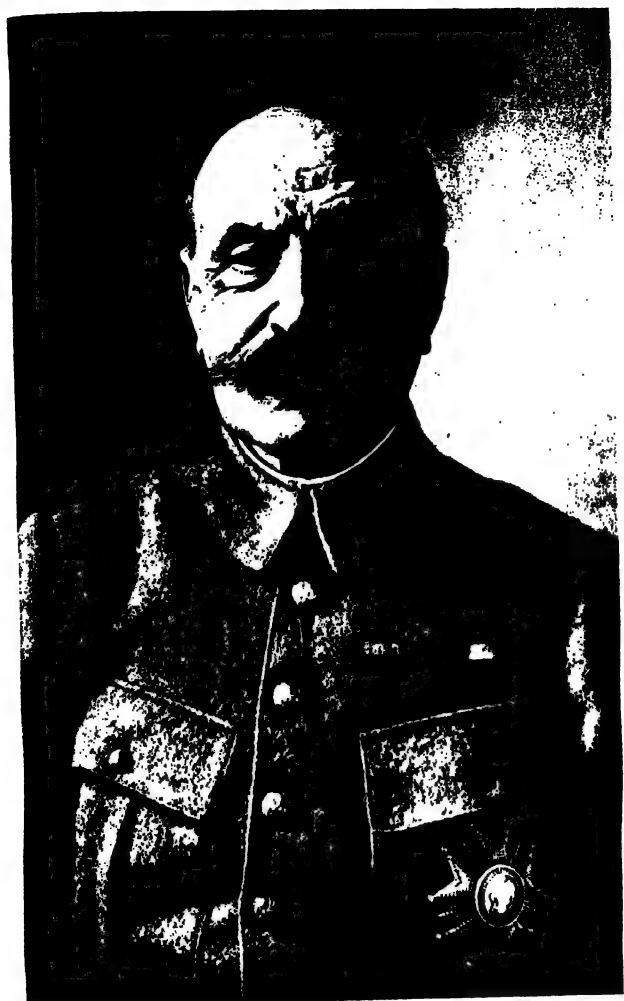
The attack on the Château-Thierry area was no more successful. Although the Marne was crossed, the infantry reaching the south bank found themselves in serious difficulties. Their ranks were riddled by the heavy and constant artillery fire of the French. A few miles distant,

in the vicinity of Fossoy, the Germans who crossed the river were caught in a trap by the Americans and sent pell-mell back across their pontoon bridges. Elsewhere the offensive similarly failed.

The plans of the German generals were well conceived and quite sound. They hoped, by sweeping through the Argonne forest, to isolate Verdun on the first day, but in this area they met the Americans, who were not only highly-trained but determined to uphold the military prestige of their native land, and prove themselves equal to their war-hardened allies. The Germans were also resolved to reach Châlons on the first day, and on the next to carry the heights in the Rheims area. After crossing the Marne they were to cut the Allied force in two, and surge forward like an irresistible torrent towards Paris. All their plans were, however, happily set at naught. The Germans were out-generalled and out-fought. In the Last Battle of the Marne the military genius of France was pitted against German military science, and the nimbler and more original brain achieved the triumph.

A German officer, who has given a vivid account of his experiences, tells how he and others had awaited impatiently for five weeks, daily expecting the order to press forward. The Marne, they understood, was to be crossed and Paris reached soon afterwards, but some-

thing had gone wrong with the plans. At length, however, on 14th July, the order came to move forward. The regiment of the officer who provides the narrative was ordered to take up a position in a sheltering wood about 3 miles distant from the Marne. There were no trenches or dug-outs, and the French artillery pounded the wood and the slopes with gas shells and high-explosives. The German infantry took over two hours to advance about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. At 1 a.m. the position allotted was reached. Then the French artillery broke forth in great fury. The ground was lashed by shells, and the Germans took what cover was possible by creeping into shell-holes. So heavy and constant was the bombardment that the regiment was in time completely isolated. Shells were falling in front and behind, and for two hours no news was received of what was happening. Then word came in that one attempt to cross the river had failed and that another had succeeded. The German barrage was by this time falling heavily in front, and the infantry moved forward. An advance of about 1000 yards was made. But when dawn broke the Germans who had crossed the river found themselves subjected to a determined counter-attack. American troops had crept forward and shot down the Germans at close range. The officer tells that his men were unnerved by the tactics of the Americans. "Lying



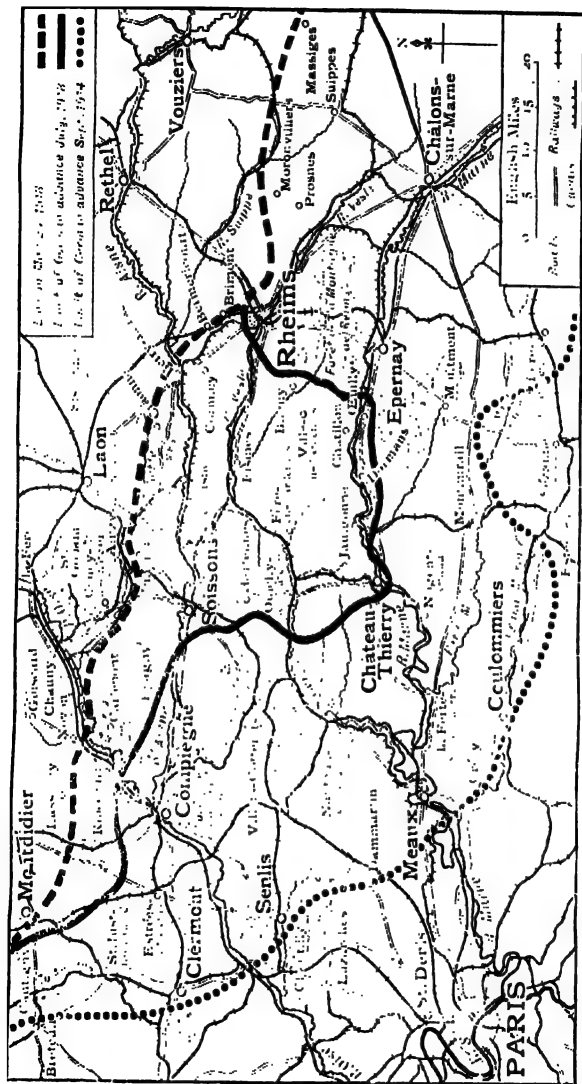
1911

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## MARSHAL FOCH

Generalissimo of the Allied Armies on the Western Front





THE FIRST AND LAST ADVANCES ON PARIS

down," he says, "they waited until our infantry were only from 30 to 40 yards distant; then they opened fire, almost annihilating them. We must give these Americans credit for nerves for rough and brutal fighting! 'The Americans have slain the lot' was the terrible cry of 15th July which our men could not forget for long afterwards."

About sixty per cent of the advancing Germans were killed or wounded. All along the line the casualties were similarly heavy. The successes achieved were rendered almost worthless by the losses sustained. On the 16th the Germans were unable to move farther. They fought desperately against counter-attacks on the two following days, but on the night of the 18th they had to begin the retreat across the Marne under heavy fire, beaten and disillusioned.

They were disillusioned in more than one connection. German soldiers had been convinced that the Allies had no reserves, that they were short of food and munitions, and war-weary. They had believed in the impregnability of their own Hindenburg line, and had seen it broken. The soldiers lost confidence in their leaders. Ultimate disaster seemed inevitable. All the hopes built up during the winter and spring vanished like morning mist before the rising sun. Men deserted by night in increasing numbers, or yielded willingly when Allied troops came close enough to afford them pro-

tection. Well did the Germans know, when the Last Battle of the Marne was fought, that they had lost the war. Such are the post-war confessions of a German officer.

The counter-blow followed quickly after the German failure. Foch brought up his reserves, including the Americans and the four British divisions, reinforced by the boy-soldiers of England and Scotland. "No veterans", declared Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons about a fortnight later, "ever fought with greater courage than those lads. . . . We must all be proud of the boys who have so upheld the honour of their native land, and helped to save the cause of the Allies from disaster." Foch, with his reserves, attacked on three sides of the bulging German salient, and, as one of the correspondents at the front graphically put it, "smashed the Crown Prince's army like a cardboard box".

The first counter-blow was struck by the troops under the command of General Mangin in the Villers-Cotterets forest region. His troops, artillery, and tanks were concealed in thick belts of woodland. The concentration had been in progress for some time. It was imposing on the 15th, when the Germans opened their offensive. Two days later every gully and road was thronged with troops, and much heavy artillery had been brought up. There were also strong forces of cavalry and numerous aero-

planes. "Foch has no reserves", the German staff officers were telling one another. Many of them remained confident, although their offensive had been delayed. They thought they would yet "blast their way through", and sooner or later reach Paris.

The great German salient was, at its base between Rheims and Soissons, about 36 miles in width, and it bulged from the River Aisne southward about 26 miles, part of it being across the Marne. The Villers-Cotterets side of the salient was lightly held. Although it was necessary that it should be strongly defended, the Crown Prince, the nominal commander of the German forces in the salient, took the risk of leaving it weak, so as to push his main forces across the Marne, and as far beyond it as possible.

General Mangin attacked the Villers-Cotterets side of the salient with dramatic suddenness on the morning of 18th July. On the night before a great thunderstorm was raging in the forest region, and the thunder-peals drowned the noise of the numerous tanks that were lumbering forward. At 4.30 a.m. Mangin attacked the German lines without warning. As his artillery opened a bombardment, the tanks burst through all obstacles, and aeroplanes swept down to bomb the enemy and turn machine-guns on them. Cavalry poured through the breaches made by the tanks, and

the infantry attacked in overpowering force. There never was a more unexpected attack on such a big scale. Hundreds of Germans were awakened to find themselves in peril.

Four thousand prisoners and 30 guns were taken at the first dash. On the following day the prisoners exceeded 16,000. It seemed certain from the first that Mangin's success would force the Germans to discontinue their offensive and withdraw from the salient. Counter-attacks were made, but Mangin had struck too hard and too successfully to be repulsed. The Germans hastily returned across the Marne, and were followed by the Allies. Meanwhile an attack was being made on the Rheims side of the salient. A hurried retreat of the German centre began, and, although it was skilfully conducted, large numbers of guns and much war material had to be left behind.

The Germans were beaten. Their chief efforts for the rest of the month were put forth to prevent complete disaster. Their reserves were speedily used up, and by 2nd August the Allies were in Soissons, and the whole salient had been wiped out. Foch had fought and won the Last Battle of the Marne. The Germans were bereft of the power to take the offensive, and were at the mercy of the Allies, who began, on 8th August, to strike the first blows of the last and victorious campaign on the Western front.

General Mangin, after Soissons was occupied, issued a special message to the British divisions that were under his command when he struck the final blow that cleared the salient.

"Your country", he said, "will be proud of you. . . . I am proud to have fought at your head. I thank you. . . . All your deeds, whether in Flanders or Palestine, have shown the magnificent qualities of the courage and imperturbable tenacity of your race."

Before dealing with the great autumn offensive on the Western front, which closed with the armistice, the Italian situation and the collapse of Bulgaria and Turkey will be passed under review.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### Austrians Baffled in Italy

When the Germans were endeavouring to break through the Allied lines and capture Paris, the Austrians opened a great offensive against the Italians on a front of 90 miles. It began on Saturday, 15th June, after artillery preparation which was exceptionally intense. The main enemy efforts were made in the Asiago-Monte Grappa area and along the Piave. Some initial successes were achieved. At one or two points the Austrians crossed the Piave, but they met with a brilliant resistance.

On its second day the offensive proved to be a failure. The gains achieved by the Austrians were insignificant, and their losses were very heavy. On the British part of the line the battle died down after a single day's fighting. It was limited by Monday to an artillery duel from the Asiago area to Monte Grappa, but along the Piave the pressure was maintained with endeavour to reach the plains.

General Diaz, who was in supreme command, issued an order on the Tuesday praising the

Italian, French, and British troops for the valour displayed on "the great days", Saturday and Sunday. He made special mention of the Northumberland Fusiliers, the Sherwood Foresters, the Royal Warwicks, and the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry.

The battle along the Piave continued fiercely, the Austrians taking little apparent heed of the immense losses inflicted on them.

On 20th June the Italians delivered a successful counter-attack in the Montello sector, forcing the enemy to withdraw their front. The pressure was continued, and the Austrians were so heavily defeated between Montello and the sea that they had to recross the Piave in disorder, followed by the victors. Over 4000 prisoners were captured. In a single week the enemy casualties amounted to about 180,000 men. On Monday, 24th June, the prisoners taken amounted to 3000. By the beginning of July all the ground lost since 15th June had been regained. On the 6th, after a bitter struggle extending over five days, the Austrians were driven from all the coastal region between the Lile and Piave, which they had occupied from the previous November. The zone of protection for Venice was thus considerably enlarged. From 15th June till 6th July the Austrian prisoners taken amounted to about 24,000.

The opportunity seemed favourable for the Italians to take the offensive. But General



Diaz adopted a cautious policy. His supply of munitions was not too great, and his reserves, even though they were being strengthened by American troops, were too limited to allow of risks being taken. Besides, the Italian front was, by this time, a part of the Western front, and the situation on the Marne still remained critical. The Austrians were superior in numbers, and Italy's chief service to the Allied cause at this period was to keep immobilized over a million enemy troops on a wide and difficult front.

In Austria the spirit of revolt had been kindled and had begun to affect the army. Troops returning from the Russian front were giving serious trouble. Food riots in the cities increased the gravity of the internal situation.

General Diaz began to strike in Albania early in July, with the assistance of British troops, and local successes were achieved. Austria was to be seriously threatened from this region at a later period.

The Last Battle of the Marne had emphasized the fact that Germany and her allies were doomed to suffer disastrous defeat. But before the end was reached on the Western front, the white flag began to flutter in the Balkans.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### Collapse of Bulgaria

Bulgaria was the first of the enemy Powers to be beaten to submission. Her collapse came with unexpected suddenness during the latter half of September, 1918, when the Macedonian front was broken and the Bulgars were scattered in confused retreat. Before many days went past Bulgaria asked for an armistice. When she did so the Germans knew that the end was near. Turkey was being isolated by the surrender, and their own eastern front exposed to an attack for which they were unprepared and which they were unable to resist. Bulgaria was the corner-stone of German policy and her removal meant irretrievable disaster.

French and Serbian troops secured the first successes in the general Balkan offensive, which was suddenly undertaken about the middle of September. They attacked on the western part of the line, and achieved a break through which was followed up by cavalry. The Bulgars retreated rapidly, setting fire to depots and camps, and leaving heavy guns and thousands

of prisoners in the hands of the victorious Serbs. On the east, British and Greek troops attacked on both sides of Lake Doiran, and the fighting was heavy. Progress was achieved despite the vigorous resistance shown by the enemy in this area.

The swift successes achieved by Serbians and French threw the Bulgars into much disorder. From the 15th until the 21st September an advance of 65 kilometres was achieved. The retreat, ultimately, became a rout, and a great victory began to develop; the whole front was soon involved, and the situation became extremely critical for Bulgaria when the Vardar railway was cut, and a great wedge driven northward which separated the First Bulgarian Army in the Monastir-Prilep region from the Second Army in the Doiran sector. The enemy columns were followed by the Franco-Serbian vanguard, harassed by cavalry, riddled by machine-guns, and bombarded by Allied aeroplanes. French cavalry entered Prilep on 24th September, and captured immense quantities of supplies. On the west, strong forces of the enemy were driven towards the mountains of Albania, while in the centre Serbian and French troops crossed the River Vardar. On the right the British and Greek armies advanced along the Lake Doiran sector. Their persistent pressure had prevented the enemy from transferring his reserves to the west, where

the Serbians and French delivered the main attack.

The Bulgarian retreat was greatly hampered by the rapid advance of the Allies. Pressing up the Vardar valley, they deprived the Second Bulgarian army of that natural line of communications, and it was placed in a precarious position north-west of Prilep. The German army, which was reinforcing the Bulgarians, was pressed into difficult mountainous country. On the east the British crossed the Bulgarian frontier and occupied Strumnitza, while the Serbians occupied Ishtip. Uskub, the strategical key of the Balkans, was then threatened. From this town runs northward an important road as well as the railway line to Nish and Belgrade. The Allies were advancing against it from Velles when the Bulgarians capitulated and signed the armistice on 30th September.

The end came more swiftly than had been anticipated. A Bulgarian officer, carrying a white flag, suddenly appeared on the British front and asked to be conducted to the French Commander-in-Chief. He explained that he was an envoy from his Government and had been ordered to ask for an armistice. Other delegates followed. They were conveyed to Salonika, where they accepted all the conditions laid down. These provided for the evacuation by Bulgaria of Serbian and Greek territories occupied in 1915, the demobilization of the

greater part of the Bulgarian army, the handing over of arms and munitions and war material, the capitulation of Bulgarian units in the Uskub area, and the departure from Bulgaria of German and Austro-Hungarian troops, and all persons of German and Austro-Hungarian nationality.

King Ferdinand abdicated and fled to Austria, from which he was afterwards expelled. He was forced to take refuge in Switzerland.

The fighting in Serbia did not come to an end, however, with the capitulation of Bulgaria. It was necessary for the Serbians and their allies to press northward and expel the Austro-German troops. Heavy fighting took place before Nish was captured on 14th October. The victorious advance was afterwards continued until on 30th October the Serbians reached the River Danube and bombarded enemy vessels. Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, was recaptured on the following day, and a triumphant procession was headed by the general commanding the First Serbian Army. This historic entry of the capital took place forty-five days after the opening of the offensive on the Macedonian front.

Meanwhile the Italians, who had advanced rapidly northward through Albania, pursued the Austrians with vigour, capturing large numbers of prisoners. They occupied Scutari on 5th November.

In Sofia, Bulgaria's surrender was attributed to the failure of its allies to give sufficient help and in good time. In Germany several days were allowed to elapse after the signing of the armistice before the news of Bulgaria's "treason" was made known. The Press adopted a plaintive tone, complaining of the harshness of the Allied terms. "Bulgaria", one writer said, "is deprived of all the territory captured in brilliant and triumphal operations. It will enter the peace negotiations in a helpless condition, and be forced to accept what the Entente insists on." The Germans were beginning to realize the fate in store for themselves. With the collapse of Bulgaria, many dreams, fondly cherished, including that of the Berlin to Bagdad commercial highway, vanished into the air. The whole of the railway from Belgrade to Sofia, and from Sofia to the Turkish frontier, came under the control of the Allies.

Turkey's fate was sealed when Bulgaria signed the armistice, and the story of how its downfall was hastened is told in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### The Conquest of Palestine

The conquest of Palestine, "the jugular vein of Egypt", was one of the notable achievements of the Great War. It was necessary, in the first place, to drive the Turks from the very border of Egypt, where they had been hovering since 1914, and making attempts, time and again, to cross the Suez Canal. Sinai had therefore to be cleared of them. The peninsula is a waterless desert, with a few oases. To ensure that the British force would receive adequate supplies of munitions, food, and water, the formidable task had to be undertaken of constructing across it a railway line 150 miles long, and a water-pipe system which would carry the filtered waters of the River Nile right into the Holy Land. Nature, as well as the Turks, had thus to be subdued.

During 1917 the British desert column pushed forward across the desert until it captured the town of El Arish. It cleared the way for the sappers, who followed quickly, laying sleepers and rails and water-pipes. The possession of

El Arish was of vital importance to the British, because it lies close to the sea. No landing could be made, because the Turks had laid floating mines in its roadstead. But once the town was captured, the mines were speedily swept up and the British war-ships, which had previously destroyed El Arish fort by long-range fire, steamed into the bay. The troops were thus supplied with food and munitions by sea from Port Said.

No sooner was El Arish occupied than the retreating enemy was quickly followed up. A British column of about 2000 men performed a night march of 25 miles, and overwhelmed and captured a Turkish force of about equal numbers which had been left as a rear-guard at the town of Magdhaba, to the south-east of El Arish. The enemy were amazed at the swiftness of the British movement, which took them completely by surprise. Early in January another night march of 30 miles resulted in the capture of Rafa, on the frontier of Palestine.

The railway line was constructed as rapidly as possible, and the water-pipe crept across the desert like a great snake behind the advancing troops. It was expected at home that General Sir Archibald Murray, who was in command, would follow up his success and make a dash for Jerusalem. But his force was not strong enough, and a period of waiting ensued, which enabled the Turks to establish themselves in



force at Gaza. The object of the War Cabinet at the time was to hold as many Turks as possible in Southern Palestine so as to relieve the enemy pressure in Mesopotamia. The construction of the desert railway, moreover, had to be completed. When, therefore, an advance towards Gaza was made in March, 1917, the chief object was to clear the enemy from the area between that town and Rafa. At the same time it was hoped that Gaza would be taken, as water was scarce, and mounted troops could not go far without sufficient supplies. There was a limit to the pipe supply from Egypt.

The First Battle of Gaza, fought in March, was a partial success. All the British troops fought well, and inflicted severe losses on the enemy, but the town had been well fortified, and could not be taken. Three weeks later, on 17th April, the Second Battle of Gaza was begun. The Turks had, however, received reinforcements, and were able to set up a determined resistance. Sir Archibald Murray had received a few tanks, which did good work, but the German and Austrian gunners put most of them out of action. Two British monitors and a French battleship shelled the Turkish positions. Their assistance was valuable. Two days of heavy fighting, however, did not bring sweeping successes. The Turkish trenches were elaborate, and their earthworks strong and well defended. On the third day



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NEW YORK

GENERAL SIR EDMUND ALLENBY, K.C.B.

Commander-in-Chief, Egyptian Expeditionary Force in Palestine



1917

Official Photo 2017

## THE LIBERATION OF JERUSALEM

General Allenby making his official entry into the Holy City on December 11, 1917

the British forces made a concentrated effort to break through the Turkish lines, which extended from the coast eastward past Gaza to the Damascus railway line. Heavy artillery from sea and land pounded the enemy positions, but the broken character of the ground was in the Turkish favour, and, although the British made progress, it was calculated that if the successes achieved had been rashly followed up, the casualties would have been too heavy. General Murray's force was not large enough to run any risk, especially as the Turks were constantly receiving reinforcements. The day after the battle was spent in consolidating the ground captured from the enemy. Counter-attacks were expected, but the Turks had lost too severely to be able to develop any of much account, nor were they themselves in a position to take chances. Bagdad had been lost a few weeks before, and they were determined to hold on to Gaza lest Jerusalem should be captured.

Some weeks after the Second Battle of Gaza General Allenby was appointed to succeed General Murray, who returned home to take up the Aldershot command. The War Council had resolved to proceed with the Palestine campaign, and reinforcements and supplies were sent out to ensure its success.

When General Allenby was ready to advance into Palestine, the Turks were beaten by a

series of surprise blows. The first was delivered at Gaza, where they thought they were secure, for its works had been greatly developed and were tremendously strong. A Turkish officer, who was taken prisoner before the attack in force began, laughed at the idea that Gaza could be captured. He and others were not prepared for the lightning tactics of General Allenby.

The preliminary artillery bombardment from land and sea was very heavy. Turkish prisoners taken later said they had not experienced anything like it since the war-ships pounded the positions on Gallipoli. East Anglian and other Home County troops pushed forward along the sea-front. Indians kept up a steady pressure to the south-east of Gaza, and Scottish Territorial troops, who took part in the final dash, performed the great feat of making a night march of 13 miles across desert country, bringing their heavy guns with them. Important work was performed by mounted Australians. They made a great sweep in moonlight on the Turkish left. One force captured a hill, named Sakaty, about 6 miles north-east of Beersheba, and got across the Hebron Road, so as to cut off the Turkish retreat in that direction. Australians and New Zealanders attacked another hill, named Tell es Saba, which is 1000 feet high. They dismounted at the first line of Turkish trenches and swept all before them at

the point of the bayonet. Then they remounted their horses and galloped into Beersheba.

The fighting during the early days of November was gallantly carried out. Nothing could resist the dash of our troops. Many surprise attacks were made by night, as the moon glimmered over the Judean hills. Barbed-wire entanglements were torn down, trenches cleared, and counter-attacks beaten off.

The Turkish line crumpled up as Allenby's force worked round Gaza, which was being gradually enclosed. The Turks, finding their retreat threatened, were forced to retire and leave their strong earthworks, behind which they had expected to be able to make a determined stand. Before they left, they blew up a big ammunition store. The concussion was a terrible one, and was heard at a distance of 20 miles. It was, however, a cheering sight to our troops to see a great mushroom of smoke rising in the air as a sign that the enemy was bidding them a hurried "good-bye". The Scottish Territorial troops which had come up so smartly pressed forward and occupied a favourable position to the north of Wadi Hesi. Their guns commanded the railway, and they prevented the Turks getting away much war material.

The final attack was launched at midnight and was made on two sides. Our troops advanced with dash and captured Ali-el-Muntar,

where Samson had performed his great feat of carrying off the gates of Gaza. They swept into the town at daybreak on 8th November.

It soon became evident that the Turks were in full retreat. They were pursued, and the retreat was changed, in part, into a rout. Two days after Gaza fell, the British forces were hammering the Turks at a distance of 20 miles north of the town. The old Philistine town of Askalon was captured, and the way was afterwards gradually cleared for an attack on Jerusalem, the ancient capital of the Holy Land, which had been in possession of the Turks since 1517.

The city of Jerusalem occupies a naturally strong position within the fork of two ravines, about 2500 feet above the level of the sea. It is surrounded by walls and contains mosques, churches, and convents. The chief Christian building is the church of the Holy Sepulchre in the north-west quarter, believed to be built over the grave in which Christ's body was laid. On the east side is an enclosure, sacred to Moslems, called "The Noble Sanctuary", the most notable building of which is the Mosque of Omar, occupying the site of the ancient Jewish temple. Alike to Hebrews, Christians, and Moslems, the city has sacred associations, and when the British troops advanced against it care was taken that no injury should be done to any building or sacred site.

The offensive began on 7th December, 1917. Strong positions were held by the Turks, who had dug trenches on the west and south and north-east of the city, protecting these by barbed-wire entanglements. They had also placed artillery at points that commanded the summits over which the British troops had to move. Indeed, some Turkish guns had been placed in the vicinity of the city walls; and, if the British artillery had opened fire against them, much damage would have been done. General Allenby had resolved, however, that not a single British shell should fall near the sacred city of Jerusalem.

The weather favoured the Turks, and caused much suffering among the attacking forces. Rain fell in torrents, and the roads became like quagmires, while the hill slopes were rendered slippery and dangerous. The wind was bitterly cold and piercing, especially by night, but in spite of all hardships our men advanced steadily, breaking down the Turkish defence by a series of determined and well-planned attacks. On the Hebron Road, which runs northward from Beersheba, Cheshire and Welsh troops advanced steadily towards Bethlehem, where the Turks had posted heavy guns. If these had been replied to by British artillery, the village of sacred associations would have suffered much damage. It was evidently the desire of the Turks that their positions there should have been attacked



by artillery, but the valiant attacking force pressed on, and drove the enemy from their trenches at the point of the bayonet, clearing the village and advancing a good distance beyond it. Meanwhile mounted infantry were advancing from the west on Jerusalem, and earlier in the day had broken through and captured the Turkish positions.

The Turks made a determined stand on the summit of the ridge which overlooks the Holy City, taking shelter among the boulders strewn along it. It was no easy task to attack them in this position, for the slopes of the ridge are steep and the rainy weather had rendered them slippery. Yet when, on the afternoon of the 8th December, the command was given to charge, the London troops did not hesitate. Up the slopes they climbed with splendid dash, facing a screen of machine-gun bullets. Many fell, but the survivors pressed on and, reaching the summit, attacked the enemy with their bayonets. The Turks fought desperately. They were determined to maintain themselves in Jerusalem at any cost, and it was a surprise to find that they endeavoured to hold the position by crossing bayonets with the British troops. But they were no match in hand-to-hand fighting with the gallant attackers, and after a brief resistance, during which the losses on both sides were heavy, they broke and fled. When darkness fell, the whole Turkish force was in retreat.

Jerusalem had been evacuated and freed forever from Turkish control.

Next morning, when the Turks were being driven back on the north, the civic rulers of Jerusalem came out of the city with a flag of truce to surrender the city, which had been spared from attack by the victorious British troops. The general commanding the Londoners, who had cleared the Turks from the last ridge, accepted the surrender, and sent forward pickets of troops to guard certain points. He did not, however, enter the city.

Meanwhile, on the north, the Turks were doing their utmost to hamper British movements. The ridge known as Mount Scopus was in their possession, but they were cleared from it at the point of the bayonet. They were afterwards driven from the Mount of Olives, where a nest of machine-guns had been placed.

General Allenby then advanced, on horseback, to take formal possession of Jerusalem, accompanied by a few members of his staff and the military attachés of France, Italy, and the United States of America. At some distance outside the Jaffa gate he dismounted, and the party proceeded on foot. General Allenby's entry on this memorable afternoon of 11th December, 1917, was a complete contrast to that of the Kaiser, who, a few years before, rode in on horseback through a breach made in the wall. At the Jaffa gate, General Allenby was received

by guards representing England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, India, France, and Italy. The population greeted the victor with much enthusiasm, clapping their hands, and throwing flowers in his path.

Guards were placed over all holy places. The sacred Moslem quarter was given guards of Indian Mohammedan soldiers, a fact which was much appreciated by the Moslems in the city. The guardian of the Mosque of Omar exclaimed, as General Allenby drew near:

*"Praise be to God that the British have come. Now we shall be able to live in peace and prosperity. Our time of suffering has reached an end."*

No non-Moslems were allowed to pass beyond the cordon of Mohammedan troops. The Christian and Jewish holy places were similarly protected.

General Allenby issued a proclamation to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in which they were asked to pursue their lawful business and guaranteeing them protection. "Since your city", it was declared, "is regarded with affection by the adherents of three of the great religions of mankind, and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of multitudes of devout people of these three religions for many centuries, therefore do I make known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious

bequest, or customary place of prayer of whatsoever form of the three religions will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faiths they are sacred."

On 26th December the Turks made a determined attempt to recapture Jerusalem. Their rally, however, was in vain.

The conquest of the rest of Palestine was accomplished in the face of many difficulties. Extremes of climate had to be endured. During the winter the cold was terrible, and the Egyptian Labour Corps suffered heavily. Then, when the bad weather came on, the malaria scourge had to be kept at bay. In the spring General Allenby had to part with two of his six divisions, which were called to France as a result of the successes achieved there by the Germans in March and April. His cavalry and even his artillery were thus reduced. Indian troops were sent to Palestine to reinforce General Allenby's army, but many of them had never been under fire. The advance was consequently delayed until the summer of 1918. But when it was renewed it proved to be a victorious one. General Allenby's "lightning tactics" threw the Turkish forces into complete confusion. He was greatly helped by Arab forces, which kept up a constant pressure against the enemy on the east of the river Jordan.

During the victorious drive northward, rapid movements were made by British, Indian, and Australian cavalry, who time and again seized strategic points, cut off the Turkish retreat, and captured large numbers of prisoners and much war material.

In September, General Allenby delivered an overpowering attack against the Turkish lines which extended from Nablus to the coast. The enemy positions were naturally strong and the Turks had been working hard at them during the spring and summer. Nablus itself is situated in a hilly region, and from there the enemy defences ran along the foothills towards the coastal plain.

General Allenby struck his first blow in the coastal area. On 19-20th September a determined night attack was made by Welsh and Indian troops, who cut through the barbed-wire entanglements and streamed into the enemy trenches. This success was speedily followed up, and a gap was created through which Australian, British, and Indian cavalry poured in force. Before eight o'clock in the morning, the horsemen were galloping northward to cut off the Turkish retreat. They soon entered the field of Armageddon, the great battle-field of the Old Testament, which is used figuratively in the Apocalypse to signify "the battle of the great day of God". This "field" is the table-land of Esdraelon in

Galilee and Samaria, and on it were fought, in ancient days, many battles between the Hebrews and their enemies. It is in the strategic sense "the gateway of Palestine". The Australian, British, and Indian cavalry crossed the plain and occupied Nazareth, El-fule, and Beisan. All roads of escape northward were thus cut off from the Turks, except the fords across the Jordan, and to the east of that river the Arabs were in force and were raiding the railway line to Damascus and destroying bridges.

Thus were the Turks compelled to abandon their defences, which were particularly strong, especially among the hills round Nablus. Their flight was hurried and confused. It was quickly followed up, while British aeroplanes constantly attacked masses of retreating troops by dropping bombs and by machine-gun fire at short range. On the morning of 22nd September over 30,000 prisoners were counted. Two Turkish armies had been destroyed, and their entire transport captured, with about 300 guns. King George telegraphed to General Allenby expressing the pride and admiration with which the news of the great victory had been received at home. "I am confident", added his Majesty, "that the success which has effected the liberation of Palestine from Turkish rule, will rank as a great exploit in the history of the British Empire, and will stand for all time as a memor-

able testimony to British leadership and the fighting qualities of British and Indian troops."

Allenby followed up his successes in characteristic style. The cavalry moved rapidly northward, accompanied by armed motor-cars. On the night of 30th September, Australian mounted troops entered the ancient city of Damascus, which was occupied next day by a British force and a portion of the Arab army. The whole of northern Syria was swept by cavalry and armoured cars, and at no point could the Turks set up organized resistance. On 8th October the coastal town of Beyrout was occupied, and on the following day, Baalbek, the ancient "city of the sun" with its stately and ancient ruins, was in British hands. Tripoli, "famous in story" as a port of the Phœnician sea-traders, fell on 13th October.

The final "knock-out" blow came about a fortnight later, when the Bagdad railway was cut by the capture of Aleppo by cavalry and armoured cars. It was expected that the Turks would have made a stand at this vital point, because the occupation of Aleppo isolated their army in Mesopotamia as well as the scattered remnants of their forces in Syria. But Allenby's rapid movements gave them no time to organize defence. A force of 12,000 Turks had collected at Aleppo, but it showed little resistance, and retired northward as the British approached. The cavalry ride towards the Bag-

dad railway was a fine performance. At any other time of year it would have been wellnigh impossible, owing to scarcity of water. Allenby had struck his final blow against the Turks at the very period when campaigning in that area could be conducted with success. Aleppo is a very old town. It was an outpost of the Ancient Egyptian Empire in Asia long before Moses was born. Situated on the edge of the desert, it is the trading centre of a fruitful area, and its population is over 200,000.

On the day before Aleppo was occupied, the British force in Mesopotamia was advancing northward and driving the Turks from strong positions. The Turks burned their stores and retreated from hill positions and deep ravines. Kirkuk, a town between the Upper Zab and the Lower Zab, two tributaries of the Tigris, was occupied, and the Upper Zab was crossed. Hard fighting ensued, and by 30th October the entire Turkish army opposed to the British Mesopotamian force on the Tigris River was captured. The prisoners numbered over 7000. As the operations were carried on at a distance of 70 miles from the railway head, and transport and supply difficulties were great, this achievement was a notable one.

Meanwhile Allenby pushed northward from Aleppo towards a Turkish concentration camp about 30 miles distant, while the Arabs attacked the Bagdad railway. The whole of the



Asiatic Empire of Turkey, with the exception of Anatolia and Armenia, was then captured.

The end came quickly. Turkish Plenipotentiaries, who had hastened to Mudros, met Vice-Admiral Calthorpe on behalf of the Allied Governments and signed an armistice on 31st October. Its terms included a free passage for the Allied fleets through the Bosphorus to the Black Sea.

Mine-sweeping began at once in the Dardanelles, and on 12th November the Allied fleet steamed through this famous strait. It arrived off Constantinople on the following morning. British and Indian troops occupied the forts of the Dardanelles. Thus, with dramatic suddenness, did Turkey's participation in the Great War come to an end.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### Germany and Austria Defeated

Reviewing the war, in his dispatch published in April, 1918, Earl (then Sir Douglas) Haig wrote: "The idea that a war can be won standing on the defensive and waiting for the enemy to attack is a dangerous fallacy, which owes its inception to the desire to evade the price of victory. It is an axiom that decisive success in battle can only be gained by a vigorous offensive."

It was the spirit displayed in these memorable words that brought victory to the Allied cause. One of the most remarkable things about the campaign of 1918 was the promptitude with which Haig rose to the occasion when the Germans were worsted in the Last Battle of the Marne, and suddenly placed on the defensive. It was not expected at Berlin that the Allies would take quick advantage of the new situation. They were supposed to be in a state of exhaustion in consequence of the losses sustained during the heavy months of fighting that had gone past. It had, indeed, been confidently

declared in the Reichstag in June that a complete military decision was impossible of realization. If the German offensive failed, the German defensive would prove too strong for the Allies.

But the enemy reckoned without Foch and the unrivalled British army. Haig's heroes were not dismayed nor disheartened. They had "the will to win" and the resources that were necessary to ensure victory. When, therefore, Foch called upon Haig to move forward at the beginning of August, a new and powerful offensive was opened that was to end the war by accomplishing the overwhelming defeat of the Germans. That they were soundly beaten, no doubt can remain. It was not on humanitarian grounds that they asked for an armistice. Their casualties between March and November exceeded a million men; between 18th July and 11th November they lost in prisoners alone 385,500, and had taken from them between 6000 and 7000 guns, while they were driven from their strong defences, out-manceuvred and out-generalled in the subsequent "war of movement".

Haig has written of the war on the Western front as a long-drawn-out battle that lasted from the winter of 1914 till the beginning of the winter of 1918. He compared Ludendorff's offensives of 1918 to Napoleon's fierce attack at Waterloo with his last reserves. The comparison affords one a bird's-eye view of the

protracted operations which left the situation in a state of uncertainty until the summer of 1918, when the war lords of Berlin made their great gamble and lost. They began to use up their reserves in the spring, when they struck towards Amiens; they expended the remnant at the Last Battle of the Marne. Their "last throw" resembled that of Napoleon, as has been said, but the modern Waterloo was not an affair of hours; the final phase of the great struggle lasted for months.

The British army struck the first strong blow against the enemy after the battle of the Marne. On 8th August Haig set out to destroy the enemy's great salient before Amiens, attacking on a 20-mile front. The battle lasted for four days, and resulted in the gain of much ground and the capture of nearly 22,000 prisoners and about 400 guns. On the first day the advance was considerable, extending from 4 to 7 miles. French troops assisted in the attack, and great work was accomplished by the new light tanks and the cavalry, while the dauntless airmen rendered valuable service by bombing and machine-gunning the masses of retreating troops. On the third day the British had reached Chaulnes, and the French took Montdidier and pressed beyond it. When the battle closed down the Germans were fighting heavy delaying actions on the outskirts of Roye.

An important political development took

place when this victory had been won. The British Government issued a declaration regarding the right of the Czecho-Slovaks to be recognized as an Allied nation, and the right of the Czecho-Slovak National Council to be regarded as the trustee of the future Czecho-Slovak Government.

On 21st August a surprise attack was delivered by the British Third Army, under General Byng, on a 10-mile front north of the Ancre. It began without artillery preparation, and good progress was made. On the following day the sector between the Somme and the Ancre was attacked, and Albert retaken. Mangin was at the same time developing an offensive between the Oise and the Aisne, and making progress towards the St. Gobain *massif*.

The British offensive spread over a 30-mile front. On the north Byng was pushing towards Bapaume, while Rawlinson was advancing on both sides of the Somme towards Peronne. In the centre was Pozières Ridge, which had proved so formidable an obstacle in 1916. Splendid progress was made from day to day. On the north the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line was reached at Croisilles by the 25th, and a portion of Pozières Ridge carried. In four days three times as much ground was won in the Somme valley as had been taken in three months in 1916. By 29th August, Bapaume

was entered, while the French, under Mangin, pressing northward, captured Noyon. Croisilles fell on the 28th, after being outflanked by London troops. A strong resistance was set up before Peronne, which, however, fell before the end of the month. Between 21st August and 3rd September the armies of Byng and Rawlinson together took about 54,000 prisoners and about 470 guns. A determined attempt was made by the Germans to hold on to the ruptured Drocourt-Quéant switch-line of the Hindenburg system, but several more miles of it were carried after heavy fighting.

The Germans were retreating "according to plan"—a plan forced upon them—during the first fortnight of September, as a result of the assaults against vital points. They were forced to yield much of the ground they had won during the spring offensive. Counter-attacks were made to relieve the pressure of the British, but these were gradually overcome.

On 12th September the Americans opened an offensive against the great St. Mihiel salient to the south of Verdun, and achieved a brilliant success. The Germans had remained secure in this sector since 1914. The American plan of campaign was well conceived and worthily carried out. Attacks were made on either side, while the Germans were held up at the point of the bayonet by French Colonial troops. The Americans advanced so rapidly that the defence

was paralysed, and the Germans surrendered after making a poor show of resistance. In a single day the salient was completely flattened out, and by the time the operation was completed, about 15,000 Germans had been taken prisoner.

The next series of battles that were waged during the latter part of September had for their aim the possession of the Hindenburg line. These reached a culminating phase when that defensive system was broken through in the Moeuvres area, and an advance made towards Cambrai. This was one of the vital blows of the war. It was one of the direct means which brought about the Armistice.

At the time the Hindenburg defensive system was Germany's only hope of prolonging the struggle, so that she might fight for terms. If it held, Germany's war lords believed that Britain and France would consent to conduct negotiations for peace rather than prolong the struggle beyond the winter.

The historic British attack began in fine weather, and was shared by war-hardened English, Scottish, Irish, and Australian troops co-operating with the French on their right. A stubborn defence was set up, but it was not sufficient to hold back our men, who, during the early part of the first day of the attack (the 18th), swept over the old British trench systems they had constructed in March, and captured the

outer defences of the Hindenburg line, taking over 10,000 prisoners and 60 guns.

In the afternoon the enemy attempted to neutralize the British success by delivering a counter-attack north of Moeuvres. About half a hundred batteries had been brought up and a violent bombardment followed. Under its cover the enemy infantry advanced, but their attacks were repulsed with heavy loss at almost every point. Where they succeeded in entering the British trenches they were overwhelmed by counter-attacks. Many prisoners were taken.

The weather was excellent, and when night came on a bright moon rose and shed its silvery radiance over the field of battle. Australian troops delivered a determined attack, and carried outpost positions of the Hindenburg line near the St. Quentin Canal. So complete was their success that their prisoners included three German battalion commanders, a regimental commander, and several staff officers.

The fighting went on day and night with varying success. Time and again the enemy were taken completely by surprise, when our men penetrated their defences and entered crowded dug-outs, calling upon the occupants to surrender. In some cases these shelters were as elaborate as they were strong. When they were reached by the attackers, in spite of fire from machine-gun nests, the men con-



cealed in them came forth with astonishment pictured on their faces.

Here and there the battle-line swung backward and forward. Moeuvres was captured and the Germans re-took it, only to be driven out again and leave it definitely in British hands.

It soon became evident to all that the Hindenburg line could not be any longer regarded as impregnable. Troops were crowded into the remaining defences, but after the break through at Havrincourt and about Quéant, German prisoners admitted the failure of their hope that the Hindenburg line would prove too great a barrier for the success of the British attack and expressed the belief that the end was near. "Germany has lost the war", repeated one after another. Their *moral* was breaking down rapidly.

By the end of the month the breach of the Hindenburg defences had widened considerably, and our men saw in front of them the spires of Cambrai. This town was a vital point, because at it several important roads converge. It was, also, a base of supplies, and troops concentrated there could be rushed with facility to any threatened part along a wide front. Villages clustering round Cambrai were strongly fortified, but right through these wobbled British tanks, crushing down machine-gun nests and destroying barbed-wire entanglements.

The Germans held on to Cambrai, deter-

mined to defend it at all costs. But they were ultimately forced to evacuate it in a hurry. On the south the French had advanced, fighting valiantly, until they captured St. Quentin, another point of strategic importance in the Hindenburg system. Then a great joint-attack was delivered between Cambrai and St. Quentin towards the famous town of Le Cateau, where the British army had made its gallant stand during the famous retreat from Mons in 1914. The possession of this town was of vital importance to the enemy, it being situated at the junction of France's great trunk highways and railways.

This new offensive was made possible by the hard fighting that had resulted in the capturing of the Hindenburg line defences on a front of over 35 miles from St. Quentin to Arras, with the loss to the Germans of many thousands of prisoners and hundreds of guns.

The war of movement had begun in earnest, and the new offensive met with rapid success. On 8th October an advance was made to a depth of several miles. No fewer than twenty-three German divisions were severely handled, and over 10,000 prisoners and nearly 200 guns were taken.

Le Cateau was captured on the day after Cambrai fell. The enemy were retreating rapidly, but attempted to delay the occupation of the town by rear-guard fighting. But a vigorous pursuit

was kept up, and in some places the retreat became much confused. Roads were blocked by transport and troops, and British aeroplanes swooped down, dropping bombs and opening machine-gun fire, and invariably throwing the Germans into a state of panic.

In the north the army of Ypres had been active during the latter days of September, and advanced to a depth of several miles on a 23-mile front. It struck heavily again on 14th October in the Lys valley, in conjunction with the continued advance of the First, Third, and Fourth Armies operating beyond Cambrai. The enemy were in consequence compelled to withdraw from the intervening space, evacuating Roubaix, Lille, Douai, and ultimately Tournai.

Meanwhile, along the sea-coast, the advantage gained by the advance beyond Ypres was being made full use of. On 14th October the Belgians, assisted by French troops, were on the move with Bruges as their objective. They captured Ostend three days later and were enthusiastically welcomed. The Germans were retreating from the coast, and Bruges was taken by the Belgians without a struggle. Belgium was soon to be completely liberated. Once again the British were pressing towards Mons—victors at last! Mons was entered before dawn on 11th November by Canadian troops of the First Army under General Horne. The last great blow in the Valenciennes-Mons

offensive, which gave the First, Third, and Fourth British Armies Mons and Maubeuge, forced the Germans to withdraw from the line of the Scheldt and before the Franco-Belgian attacks in the Lys valley. Ghent was entered by the victorious Belgians. The German collapse was complete.

In the south the Americans had been displaying excellent fighting qualities. Co-operating with the French, they won the Meuse - Argonne battle, one of the notable successes of the Allies on the Western front, taking over 16,000 prisoners and about 470 guns. Their last effort was made between Sedan and Metz, where, had the Armistice been delayed, they would have added to their laurels by dealing a final shattering blow against the Germans.

In Italy the long-delayed offensive against the Austrians was made possible after General Diaz secured strong American help, without which it was risky to move against superior numbers. The plans were well laid. Strong forces and heavy artillery were concentrated so as to achieve a break-through between the Grappa and Ponte de Piave to outflank the Grappa position. The preparations were carried through with the utmost secrecy. Heavy rains fell at the beginning of October and flooded the River Piave, and the weather was still bad on 24th October, when the offensive was opened.

Wind and rain screened the combatants from one another, and among the hills dense banks of mist rendered the operations difficult for the attackers and confusing to the defence. The Italians, however, went forward in compact masses in the Grappa sector and gained their objectives, though they were afterwards forced to yield some ground before furious counter-attacks. Meanwhile the British were crossing the Piave, their first success being the occupation of the island Grappa di Papadopoli, which enabled them to begin the construction of bridges for the main attack. On the 27th the river was crossed by the British, and other crossings were effected by Franco-Italian forces. A fierce and difficult struggle ensued. But the strong enemy resistance was gradually overcome, and a bridge-head 10 miles broad and 4 miles deep secured for the victorious advance. On the 29th a break-through was developing, and the Austrians were beginning to retreat. They had been massing their reserves in the Grappa sector, expecting that the chief blow was to fall there. The Austrian line was, however, going to pieces between Brenta and the sea. On 30th October several crossings of the Piave were effected. "From this moment", as a British dispatch says, "the defeat became a rout."

The Austrians, finding themselves in danger of being outflanked, began to retreat in the

Grappa sector, and the Italians followed them rapidly. On 1st November the enemy attempted to rally and delay the advance, but, after setting up a stiff struggle, their resistance along the whole front crumbled rapidly. Austria was going to pieces at home. Its last hope, the army, was being shattered. Thousands surrendered readily once the Allied advance was ensured, and had the great pursuit developed, a military disaster of unparalled magnitude would have undoubtedly ensued.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### The Armistice and Peace

The first ten days of November, 1918, were memorable indeed. Bulgaria and Turkey had surrendered. Revolution had broken out in Austria, and on 3rd November the Government surrendered, and an armistice was signed with Italy. Italian troops were at once landed at Trieste and on the Dalmatian coast. Meanwhile the Germans on the Western front were retreating along a 70-mile front from the Scheldt to the Aisne. On 8th November German delegates had asked for and received the Armistice terms. Revolution broke out, the Kaiser abdicated, and the Crown Prince renounced his claim to the throne. Both fled to Holland.

On the 11th November Mr. Lloyd George announced in the House of Commons that the Armistice had been signed at five o'clock that morning. The Germans, according to its terms, agreed to the immediate evacuation of Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine, and Luxembourg, to the occupation by Allied forces of the left bank of the Rhine, to the immediate repatriation of all Allied prisoners of war, to the

withdrawal of German troops from Russia, Roumania, and Turkey, and to the complete abandonment of the treaties signed with Russian delegates at Brest-Litovsk, and with Roumanian delegates at Bucharest. It was withal agreed that the greater part of the German fleet and all German submarines and minelayers should be handed over to the Allies, and that Heligoland should, if necessary, be occupied by the Allies.

Germany and her allies had all surrendered within forty days. Bulgaria ceased to be a combatant on 1st October, Turkey on 31st October, Austro-Hungary on 4th November, and Germany on 11th November.

The surrender of the German fleet — the greatest naval surrender in history — was an event which will bulk prominently in the annals of war. The first stage of it took place on the wide waters of the North Sea on Thursday, 21st November, 1918. Seventy modern warships, including battleships, battle-cruisers, and destroyers, came steaming towards the Firth of Forth. These were met by a British squadron, under the command of Admiral Beatty, who, when they were conveyed into the Forth, signalled his historic message to Admiral von Reuter:

The German flag is to be hauled down at 15.57 (3.57 p.m.) to-day (Thursday), and is not to be hoisted again without permission.



Beatty's next message was to the British fleet, and is as follows:—

It is my intention to hold a service of thanksgiving at 18.00 (six o'clock) to-day (Thursday) for the victory which Almighty God has vouchsafed to His Majesty's arms, and every ship is recommended to do the same.

Thick fog enveloped the North Sea, concealing the Germans' shame, as their fleet made its last free voyage, to surrender to the British and draw their naval ambitions to an ignominious end. On the way one of the German destroyers ran into a mine and was blown up. As the vessels drew nigh to the Bass Rock they came into a stretch of sunlight, and the spectacle they presented seemed almost unreal to the war-hardened veterans of the British fleet. Since the Battle of Jutland, they had searched and waited in vain for the enemy. The Germans had at last "come out", but in silence and in shame! Officers and men on the British vessels gazed with wondering eyes, trying to realize what had happened. Some had thought that at the last moment, rather than surrender, the Germans would have blown up their ships and sought a heroic end in the North Sea.

On Thursday, King George visited his fleet in the Forth. The fog had lifted sufficiently to permit of His Majesty having a glimpse of the long line of surrendered war-ships from the deck

of a destroyer, which made a round of inspection. He was welcomed by cheering officers and men on the British vessels as the destroyer, the *Oak*, passed down the lines. Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales accompanied His Majesty, who afterwards visited the *Queen Elizabeth* and met the admirals of all the squadrons.

U-boats were surrendered at Harwich and Plymouth in batches, a number being also handed over to France.

Before the end of November the German vessels in the Forth were sent north to Scapa Flow, where most of them were ultimately scuttled and sunk by the crews. For their final spectacular sensation, Germany had to pay compensation.

The terms of peace were drawn up by a conference of the Allied Powers assembled in Paris, handed to the German delegates at Versailles on 7th May, 1919, and signed on 28th June. In the Treaty was included the League of Nations Covenant.

The Peace Treaty comprised the restoration to France of Alsace-Lorraine, and provided for the occupation by France of the Saar coal-field for a period of years, her own coal-mines having suffered destruction at the hands of the Germans. The kingdom of Poland was restored, and the new state of Czecho-Slovakia set up. Germany lost all her overseas possessions. The first instalment of the war indemnity was

fixed at £1,000,000,000. A period of fifteen years was fixed for the Allied occupation of the west bank of the Rhine as a guarantee that Germany would fulfil her obligations. Germany had withal to agree to reduce her army to a strength of 100,000 men, the number of officers being limited to 4000. The general staff was dissolved, and compulsory service abolished, while manœuvres and mobilization were forbidden. The fleet was reduced to thirty-six vessels, and no submarines were allowed.

Austria was dealt with in like manner. She lost Bohemia and Moravia in the north, her Italian frontier was readjusted, and she had to recognize the independence of Czecho-Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and South Slavia (greater Serbia). The Austrian navy was surrendered, and the future possession of submarines forbidden. A great part of the River Danube was opened to traffic and placed under international control. Serbia, Greece, and Roumania received additions of territory in accordance with racial claims. Turkey had to yield much of the territory in Asia it had misgoverned for centuries. Palestine became a Jewish State, the Arabs were given independence, and Mesopotamia came under British protection.







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